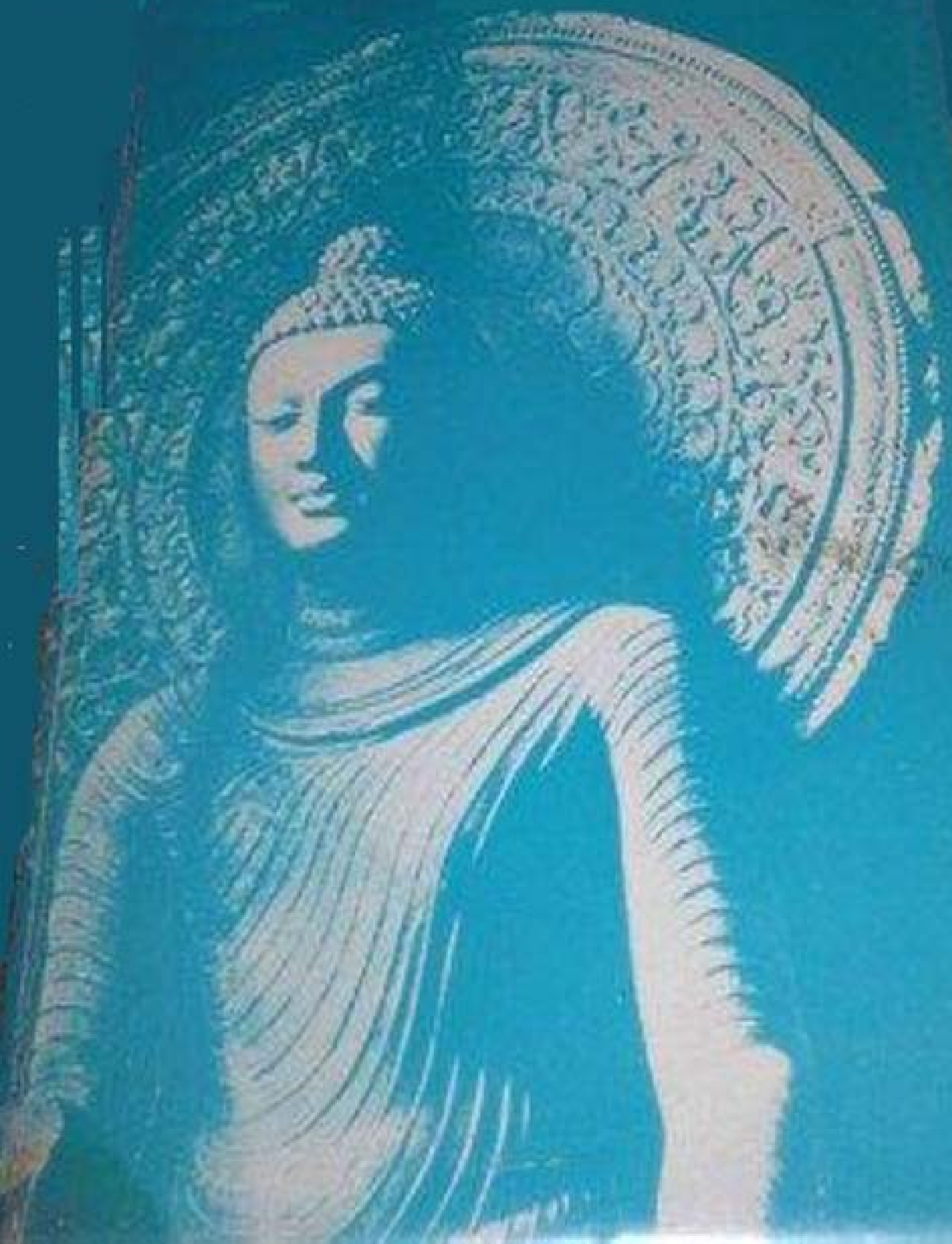
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The Psychology of Nirvana



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Contents

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that *nibbāna*[1] is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism and that a person who has attained this ultimate goal is called *arahant*. But here the agreement ends. Nibbāna has been explained in many ways. This could, as a matter of principle, be acceptable, because Buddhism has a very long history and has spread over large areas of Asia. It is quite natural that different temporal and geographical layers of literature should express different opinions and interpretations. This is one of the reasons for the diverging views expressed in our scholarly literature. Different scholars have started from different strata of the extensive literature and then often generalized their findings and supposed them to be valid for other strata as well. Buddhism has often been considered much more homogeneous than it really is. Abhidhamma works and late commentaries have, for instance, been taken as good expositions of the older Nikāya doctrine. In this way we have got more of conflicting views than of close descriptions of different strata.

Invalid generalizations seem to be one of the cardinal sins of scholarly works. Views about Buddhism have very frequently been based on a very limited range of material, most often a few quotations from the Pali canon. There are, as a matter of fact, a small number of quotations that appear again and again, while hundreds of others always pass unnoticed.

Not unexpectedly, the private biases of scholars are often found to influence their explanations. A scholar who personally favours a mechanistic philosophy, cannot so easily understand a dynamic view and has no vocabulary to express it. A Christian scholar can rarely understand a concept of salvation without connection with a soul concept. And a scholar who is sympathetic to mysticism likes to find traces of mysticism in the material he works with.

[1] This is the Pāli form of the more well-known Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*.

It is not our intention to review, or criticize, the interpretations of nibbāna which have been presented in the extensive literature in Western languages. The history of this research has recently been well described by Welbon (12). Already de la Vallée Poussin (11) wrote more than forty years ago that too much had been written about nibbāna. It is easy to agree with him: too much has been written—but this does not mean that we know too much. Exactly the opposite: our knowledge is small because too much has been written without adequate investigation. The intention of the present writer is not to review what others have written but to make a fresh and independent attempt to understand.[1] A limited selection of literature has been selected: *the Pali Nikayas*. How is nibbāna described in this literature? Does it really admit as many interpretations as have been expressed in the books written about it? Our aim is to collect and describe all the evidence as objectively as possible and if possible let it explain itself and not force any extraneous explanations upon it.

We shall hasten to admit the limitations of this investigation. What scholar has not dreamed of the perfectly objective investigation, where facts are exactly described and interpreted? This ideal has seldom been realized. The investigator is a person: he brings to his work his particular stock of knowledge, his opinions, his ambitions, his intelligence. Nobody can transcend himself, and each step in the investigation is influenced not only by the objective material itself but also by all the subjective factors. The present investigation is performed mainly from a psychological point of view. This is a limitation, because it may mean that the cultural background of the subject studied has been neglected. And further: a psychologist tends to describe the objects of his study by means of a special terminology. Is this terminology adequate? It is far removed in time and general outlook from the ancient Buddhist terminology; so already the

[1] The investigation was mainly performed during my year as visiting professor at the Tel-Aviv University, but of greater importance for the method and leading ideas was my previous year of research at the University of Ceylon. I especially want to acknowledge my debt to the work of Prof. Jayatilleke. Mr. B. Cooke, also at the University of Ceylon, has read the manuscript and spared no effort in order to help me improve it. Margot, my wife, has helped me collect the material and prepare the manuscript. My deeply felt gratitude goes to them all.

use of this terminology may lead to prejudice and misrepresentation. Then, of course, and most important of all: why psychology? Is there the faintest trace of evidence that nibbāna could be a psychological concept? Will not this mere assumption lead to a biased evaluation of the texts?

All these suspicions may be well founded. Still, an investigation of this type can be justified also, and may offer some hope of disclosing some so far undiscovered facts. Anybody with a good knowledge of psychology and its history who reads the Pali Nikayas must be struck by the fact that the psychological terminology is richer in this than in any other ancient literature and that more space is devoted to psychological analyses and explanations in this than in any other religious literature. A psychologist immediately finds that he can follow easily much of this literature, and if he knows Pali he quickly discovers that the English translators were badly at home in this field. This makes the psychologist feel generally hopeful: he can understand, he can do something. And if he, for instance, becomes interested in the meaning of nibbāna, he might put the question to himself: how far can I, with my special background, understand nibbāna? Nibbāna may not ultimately be a psychological concept, but there may be psychological aspects, or conditions, or consequences. Exactly how far can I follow? And if I can follow at all, would it not be desirable to compare the ancient ways of expression with our modern ways? Human mind cannot have changed much; only ways of expression change. So would it not be interesting to try to understand and express the old experiences in modern terminology? And one consideration more. Psychology has recently helped semantics to develop methods for analysing the exact contents of concepts and define their meanings. Quite possibly these methods could be helpful in studying a concept like nibbāna.

These are then the pros and cons. We have no illusion that this investigation is the final one of nibbāna. But considering the many different explanations in contemporary literature, every serious study could be helpful. Why should not psychology enter and do its duty?

Method

OUR method is psychological and semantic rather than historical or philosophical. It has been used in an earlier investigation of certain psychological concepts in the oldest Buddhist literature (6) and has been inspired by a work by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (8). It can be described in the following way:

(a) The investigation should be built on literary material considered to be an historical unit. This means that the times of composition should not differ too much. This requirement is difficult to meet in an investigation like this, since so little is known about the origin of the Pali canon. Our investigation has been limited to the five Nikayas. Not even the commentaries to these works have been used, as they were evidently written at a time when the living tradition was forgotten and many of the concepts had lost their original meanings.

(b) From this range of literature, the research material is collected. The ideal is here semantic completeness. According to the method proposed here, *all* statements about the concept under study should be considered, if they contribute anything at all to the interpretation. Especially should all contexts be collected where the relations between the studied concept and other concepts are indicated.

(c) This material should be confronted with a number of systematic questions, the research questions, to which the investigator is trying to find the answers.

(d) All texts that have relevance to any one of these questions should if possible be put together in such a way that they form a complete and understandable answer. This means that the investigator should try to interfere as little as possible at this stage. The texts should reply for themselves. Theories formulated by the investigator should be limited to an absolute minimum. His main responsibility is to understand the texts

adequately and see how they fit together in order to produce a comprehensive whole.

(e) The answers thus provided by the texts should be confronted with present-day knowledge and ways of expression. They should be interpreted in order to be completely understood.

The investigation has been built on the following Pāli works (within brackets, the abbreviations used are given):

Dīgha Nikāya (D)
Majjhima Nikāya (M)
Samyutta Nikāya (S)
Anguttara Nikāya (A)
Dhammapada (Dh)
Sutta Nipāta (SN)
Iti-vuttaka (I)
Udāna (U)
Thera-gāthā (Ta)
Therī-gāthā (Ti)

Quotations are always from the PTS editions (numerals refer to pages, except for Dh, SN, Ta, Ti, where they refer to number of stanza).

The general background

Nibbāna was presented in the oldest Pali literature as the solution of a problem, or rather of the whole complex of problems, which the existence in *samsāra* means to a human being. These problems will be reviewed briefly here, as they form the constant background for the understanding of nibbāna.

They have frequently been summed up into one short formula, called *tilakkhaṇa*, 'the three signs' (of existence), according to which 'all things' (*sabbe sankhārā*) are *dukkha, anicca* and *anatta*.

Dukkha is usually translated 'suffering', and this translation will be kept here, although it is far too strong. It refers to feelings of unpleasantness, unsatisfactoriness, difficulty and frustration. Life in this world is emphatically said to be more unpleasant than pleasant. There are pleasures, and they were considered real enough, but they always lead to more suffering: they are impermanent and ultimately not satisfying. Seen as a whole, *samsāra* is unsatisfactory.

Early Buddhism was a very empirical doctrine. The criterion of knowledge was direct observation. This observation can be directed either outwards, by means of the senses, or inwards, by means of introspection. What is experienced through these processes, was thought to be real (although not uncritically; dreams, for example, are rejected, SN 360). But nothing permanent was found by either process. What was observed was something ever changing, an endless series of processes, lacking not continuity but stability. In this way, Buddhism arrived at a dynamic interpretation of reality: there is no stable, unchanging reality; rather everything is a process, all the time changing, produced and disappearing under the pressure of causes. This is the meaning of the doctrine of *anicca*, 'impermanence'.

The third 'sign of existence' is *anatta*, the doctrine that there is no unchanging, permanent soul (*attā*). This view

certainly built on an empirical, introspective observation, for introspection shows us nothing but an unbroken series of processes, a stream of ideas, needs, feelings, etc. By looking inwards, we find no unchanging entity. The Buddha therefore made the same observation as Hume made much later, and he drew the same conclusion: there are processes but no 'soul'. This fact was not regarded as an obstacle to 'salvation'. On the contrary: the belief in a soul (*asmimāna*, 'the pride "I am" ') was considered a serious obstacle. The identification with the personality factors was considered to be an aspect of suffering: *n'atthi khandhādisā dukkhā*, 'there are no pains like the factors' (Dh 202).

The general view of the Buddha was, therefore, dynamic and built on the causal nature of all things. Even human life was thought to be governed by the laws of causality, and it was seen as a link in an endless causal chain, where every new life was conditioned by a former life, according to the basic idea of rebirth. In order to understand this idea we must assume a dual causality: not only the ordinary physical, but also a moral causality: there is an accumulation of the moral effects of our actions, and our next life is formed through these accumulations. We shall try to describe later how this was thought to function, but it is important to understand from the beginning that this causal law gives to man his freedom and his limitation. He is himself the cause of his present state, but he is in every moment free to transform his future—or to cut off the chain.

Man has by nature a number of traits which condition his suffering and make him wish a continuation of it. In the Pali literature, several groups of such traits can be found, the most frequent of which are the following three: (1) *rāga, dosa, moha*—desire, aggressiveness, illusion, (2) the five obstacles: *kāma-chanda, vyāpāda, thīna-middha, uddhaccakukkucca, vicikicchā*—emotion and craving, ill-will, inactivity and drowsiness, nervousness and anxiety, doubt, (3) the four *āsavā*, (obsessions), which were considered to be the most persistent of all undesirable traits, namely *kāma, bhava, diṭṭha, avijjā*—sensuality, wish to be reborn, (speculative) views, ignorance.

This is then the working-material of Buddhism: man has these traits by nature, and that is why he is liable to suffering

and rebirth. Man wants a continuation of life, he is bound to it through desires, he has views and biases and he is ignorant. But the basic attitude of Buddhism was one of optimism: there is a way to overcome all this and to find something much better: nibbāna. And man is free to follow the way. The law of causality can be manipulated: new factors can be introduced which change the future altogether. The present is conditioned by the past: but we can decide the future by appropriate actions in the present. All human problems can be solved here and now.

Now this looks very much like a method understandable to a psychologist: man has to be transformed, and a method is recommended. To be sure, his present state has been influenced by his former lives, but not by gods and devils: and his development is firmly in his own hands, in the present moment. His present state can be described in psychological terms. So our problem is: can this development be described? And can the ultimate purpose, that which is attained at the end of the road, be described? Is it a psychological state? Or is it something more? Is it a mystic state, outside the scope of psychology? Or is it rather a metaphysical fact, for instance, another dimension of existence, outside of space and time, or the absolute, the ultimate reality, which man can learn to experience or be united with?

There are these possibilities and perhaps more. Nibbāna could be in this world or in a different world, or in both. It could be psychological, ethical or metaphysical—or a combination of them all.

Some preliminary observations

We will start the investigation by collecting some of the syntactical contexts in which the word nibbāna is to be found. It is a noun and is common as an object to transitive verbs. We find at least five or six groups of verbs which take nibbāna as object.

1. Most common are cognitive verbs, especially those expressing visual perception. We find, for instance, different forms of *sacchikaroti*, 'to see with one's eyes', and *passati*, 'see'. In Ti 97 we find *addasaṃ . . . nibbānaṃ*, 'I saw nibbāna'. In A I 158 f, nibbāna is given the following cognitive attributes: *sandiṭṭhika*, 'visible here', *ehipassika*, 'inviting to come and see', *veditabba*, 'to be known'. According to U 28 *bhikkhu . . . jaññā nibbānam*, 'a monk could know nibbāna'.

2. Verbs expressing movement are frequent. Examples can be found in M I 167 *nibbānaṃ ajjhagamaṃ*, 'I came to nibbāna', SN 228 *amataṃ vigayha*, 'plunging into the deathless (a synonym for nibbāna)'; Ta 119 *nibbānaṃ hadayasmiṃ osiya*, 'settling nibbāna in the heart'.

3. Verbs of acquisition can be found, e.g. in SN 454 *nibbānapattiyā*, 'in order to attain nibbāna'; Ti 432, *nibbānañ ca labhassu*, 'acquire nibbāna!' Ta 637, *nibbānaṃ abhihāraye*, 'may he gain nibbāna'.

4. Nibbāna is an object of positive feelings. See, for instance, SN 86, *nibbānābhirato*, 'delighting in nibbāna'; SN 228, *nibbutiṃ bhuñjamānā*, 'enjoying nibbuti' (a synonym for nibbāna); M I 4 ff *nibbānaṃ nābhinandati*, 'he does not find pleasure in nibbāna'.

5. Nibbāna is an object of longing and desire: M I 167, *nibbānaṃ pariyesamāno*, 'desiring nibbāna'; Ta 330 *amataṃ abhikankhantaṃ*, 'longing for the deathless'.

6. At least twice in the books included in the present investigation (D III 251 and A III 385) we find the expression *nibbānaṃ abhijāyati*, to be translated 'he produces nibbāna'.

This reminds us of the fact that the way to nibbāna is described as a causal process, where each step leads to the next. *Dhammatā esā bhikkhave, yaṃ nibbindo viratto vimuttiñāṇadassanaṃ sacchikaroti* (A V 3), 'It follows naturally that the indifferent and dispassionate man realizes liberating knowledge and insight.' According to SN 1062, nibbāna can be attained by means of training: *sikkhe nibbānam attano*, 'he should train himself towards nibbāna'.

To sum up, nibbāna can be an object of knowledge and vision, feelings, desire, approach, acquisition and production. Seen as a group these verbs give the idea that nibbāna might be something desirable, either external, like a piece of art, or internal, e.g. some pleasant and valuable inner state which can be attained.

It should be noted that corresponding to the noun nibbāna there are the verbs *nibbāti* and *nibbāyati* with the perfect participle *nibbuta*. More common is *parinibbāyati* which most often is used with the same meaning as the simple verb. We quote a few examples. *Kathaṃ disvā nibbāti bhikkhu*? (SN 915) 'How will a monk attain nibbāna having seen it (i.e. *santipadam*, 'the state of peace')'? In SN 765 we find *parinibbanti anāsavā*, 'those free from obsessions attain nibbāna', and in SN 758, the corresponding participle: *te ve saccābhisamayā nicchātā parinibbutā*, 'these (i.e. the *ariyā*) are satisfied from understanding the truth and attain nibbāna'. The verbs seem to describe the transformation by which nibbāna is attained: the person is 'nibbāna-ed'. The literal meaning is 'to be extinguished (like a fire)', 'to be cool'. We shall discuss this metaphor later, but we note that the usage of the verb agrees with the interpretation that the attainment of nibbāna consists of a transformation from one state to another, and nibbāna would be the name of the new state.

We turn next to another type of linguistic context. Series of co-ordinated nouns are very common in the Nikāyas. Some of these series have nibbāna as their last link, which could mean either that all the words are synonyms or that they form a progressive series with nibbāna as their climax. We shall quote three of these series, the two first of which are found very frequently.

1. *Idaṃ . . . brahmacariyaṃ ekantanibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati* (D II 251). 'This monklife leads to complete detachment, to freedom from desire, to cessation, to peace, to superknowledge, to the highest insight, to nibbāna.' 2. *Etaṃ santaṃ, etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yad idaṃ sabbasankhāra-samatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo tanhakkhayo virāgo nibbānaṃ* (A V 110). 'This is peace, this is the highest, namely, the calming of all the activities, the rejection of all attachment, the destruction of craving, the freedom from desire, nibbāna.' 3. *madanimmaddano pipāsavinayo ālayasamugghāto vaṭṭupacchedo tanhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ* (I 88), 'freedom from pride, restraint of thirst, uprooting of attachment, cutting off of the cycle of existences, destruction of craving, freedom from desire, ceasing, nibbāna'.

This is then the natural context of the word nibbāna, and the three series together give us a small compendium of the chief values of Buddhism. We find that the majority of the words concern well-known facts in human experience: desire, craving, pride, activity, peace, detachment, insight. Only two of the words give us a hint that we must expect something more, namely *abhiññā* and *vaṭṭupacchedo*. The former refers to a number of supernatural achievements which may be attained by means of meditational exercises and which also are necessary in order to verify for oneself some of the Buddhist teachings. For instance, one of the *abhiññā* is the power of remembering one's own former existences. The second word refers to the chain of rebirths which the arahant knows is broken. The word *nirodha* may refer either to the highest level of meditation or to the cessation of *viññāṇa* (*viññāṇa*, 'consciousness', is instrumental in rebirth). Many of the mentioned concepts will be discussed in detail later, but our quotations have given us a general idea of what to expect: evidently nibbāna will have very much to do with our ordinary psychological functions but also with our ability to know about and change our fate outside the scope of the present life.

Cognitive functions in nibbāna

VISION and knowledge are often said to be important, even the most important ingredients in the attainment of nibbāna. Consider, for instance, the following reminiscence attributed to the Buddha himself. *Yato ca kho ahaṃ . . . evaṃ lokassa assādañ ca assādato ādīnavañ ca ādīnavato nissaraṇañ ca nissaraṇato yathābhūtaṃ abbhaññāsiṃ athāhaṃ . . . anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho paccaññāsiṃ, ñāṇañ ca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi: akuppā me cetovimutti ayaṃ antimā jāti . . . ti. . . .,* A I 259, 'But when I comprehended, as it really is, the satisfaction of the world as satisfaction, the misery as misery, and the escape therefrom as escape, then I understood perfectly and accepted full Buddha-status, and the knowledge and vision arose in me: sure is the release of my mind: this is my last birth. . . .' This reminds us that Buddha literally means 'one who has understood'.[1] The attainment of nibbāna is simply described as achieved by means of a cognitive process, namely a realistic appreciation of the pleasures and miseries of human existence and the way out. Freedom comes as an act of cognition, here as so frequently when attainment of arahant-status is described, expressed in the form of one of the so-called arahant-formulas, preceded by *jānāti*, 'he understands'.

In A IV 384 the purpose of monk life is defined in purely cognitive terms: *Yaṃ khvassa . . . aññātaṃ adiṭṭhaṃ appattaṃ asacchikataṃ anabhisametaṃ, tassa ñāṇāya dassanāya pattiyā sacchikiriyāya abhisamayāya Bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ vussati.* 'What is not known, seen, attained, realized or mastered—for the knowledge of that, the vision of that, the attainment of that,

[1] The most common translation is 'enlightened' which gives wrong associations. The root *budh* has nothing to do with light and also does not suggest that the 'clarity' is produced by external agencies.

the realization of that, the mastery of that, is the monklife lived under the Master.' And this which is not known but should be known is the four truths about suffering (*dukkha*) and its cessation.

The close affinity between knowledge and nibbāna becomes evident from M I 63, where the Buddha says that by practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* (mindfulness) during anything between seven years and seven days, one of two states can be attained: *diṭṭhe vā dhamme aññā, sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā*, 'either knowledge in this life, or, if there is some attachment remaining, the state of non-returning'. A similar connection can be discovered in A I 8, where it is said to be impossible that: *bhikkhu micchā paṇihitena cittena avijjaṃ bhecchati vijjaṃ uppādessati nibbānaṃ sacchikarissati*, 'a monk with a wrongly directed mind will pierce ignorance, attain knowledge and see nibbāna'.

Finally a very important definition from A IV 454: *Puna ca paraṃ . . . bhikkhu sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ettāvatā pi kho . . . diṭṭhadhammanibbānaṃ vuttaṃ Bhagavatā nippariyāyena*. 'And again, a monk has altogether transcended the level of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation and enters and dwells in the ending-of-ideation-and-feeling. When he has understood and seen, his *āsavā* (obsessions) are destroyed. In that meaning the Master has declared nibbāna in this life in the real sense.' We shall discuss later the two highest stages of meditation mentioned here. But we note the fact that nibbāna is not said to be identical with 'ending-of-ideation-and-feeling' (it never is, as a matter of fact): rather this meditational level, as also the others, is described as an aid to attaining the liberating knowledge and to achieving the extinction of the obsessions (*āsavā*). Innumerable times, this knowledge is mentioned as the peak experience by which arahant-status is attained. We shall come back to the question of *āsavā*, but we should note that two of them are of cognitive nature: *diṭṭhi*, '(speculative) views', and *avijjā*, 'ignorance'. The attainment of nibbāna therefore implies also intellectual clarification and complete understanding of the doctrine.

It follows that this knowledge can be attained by several

different means and with individual degrees of difficulty. There are many stories in the Nikāyas about people who suddenly and without preparation got the insight, and about others who worked strenuously with meditation for years and then finally attained it when they, for instance, saw a pretty dancing-girl (Ta 269) or when they in desperation tried to hang themselves (Ti 77). In order to explain these differences we must remember that not only the intellectual capacity is involved but also the kammic and moral state of the personality: the remaining two obsessions are of emotional and dynamic nature.

From A IV 454, quoted above, we can deduce something about the nature of cognition leading to nibbāna: the function of concentration is to make cognition less differentiated and more comprehensive, less fickle and more stable, until the ultimate state is absolutely undifferentiated and without flickering. That the cognition after the attainment has something of this nature (although nibbāna is not identical with any of the levels of meditation), is explicitly stated in A V 107: *amatogadhā sabbe dhammā, nibbānapariyosānā sabbe dhammā*, 'all mental contents (or: processes) merge into the deathless, have their end in nibbāna'. *Dhammā* refers to mental representations of all the differentiated things, in perception or free ideation. Cognition after the attainment of nibbāna is more similar to a comprehensive *Gestalt* or intuition.

Emotion and feeling in nibbāna

We must make a distinction between emotions and feelings. By feelings we mean the experience of pleasure or discomfort that normally accompany our perceptions and other conscious processes. The feelings may become very strong, as in intense physical pain, but normally they are weak, even unnoticeable. Emotion is a state of imbalance, such as anger, hate, fear, anxiety, elation, passion and love. Nibbāna is not described as an emotional state, but certainly as something pleasant, and we even find rather hedonistic descriptions. See, e.g. D III 131 *Cattāro 'me . . . sukhallikānuyogā . . . nibbānāya saṃvattanti*, 'These four types of pleasure-addictions lead to nibbāna' (the four *jhānas* are referred to). The word *sukha*, 'pleasure', 'happiness', is frequently used about nibbāna, for instance in Dh 203, *nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*, 'nibbāna is the highest happiness'. According to Ti 476, *nibbāna-sukhā paraṃ n'atthi*, 'beyond the happiness of nibbāna is nothing'. It is, however, difficult to ascertain whether *sukha* denotes only the feeling itself. In S I 38 it is said, *nibbānābhirato macco sabbadukkhā pamuccati*, 'the mortal who delights in nibbāna, is freed from all *dukkha*'. And in S II 278, nibbāna is given the attribute *sabbadukkhapamocanam*, 'freedom from all *dukkha*'. Now, *dukkha* is the opposite of *sukha* and is usually translated 'pain' or 'suffering'. This word is known to cover not only the feeling of dissatisfaction but also its backgrounds: frustration, adverse conditions leading to unhappiness. The constituents of *dukkha* are according to D II 305, *jāti, jarā, maraṇaṃ, soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā, yam p'icchaṃ na labhati, saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā*, 'birth; old age; death; grief, lamentation, suffering, misery and despair; not to get what is wished for; in short, the five factors of attachment'. This

definition certainly covers the unpleasant feeling but also both external and internal factors which according to the Buddhist doctrine make our situation unpleasant. If *sukha* is the opposite of *dukkha*, we should expect it to cover also similar background factors, or at least the absence of the *dukkha* factors. In this case, a phrase like *nibbānam sukham* should mean 'nibbāna is a source of happiness' and not 'a state of happiness'. This is a question of fundamental importance and it can be answered only when we know whether nibbāna is an internal state or not.

The relation between nibbāna and the feelings is not simple. The common word for feelings, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, is *vedanā*, which appears both in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series and the *khandha*-series. The relations between these series and nibbāna will be discussed later, but it should be mentioned that although the combination *sukhā vedanā* can be found, it is not used about nibbāna. The reason certainly is that *vedanā* is connected with differentiated, detailed perception and leads to desire, which is opposed to nibbāna. In fact, *vedanā* is described as a danger to nibbāna. SN says: *vedanānaṃ khayā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbuto* (SN 739), 'By getting rid of feelings, the monk becomes free from hunger and attains *parinibbāna*'. From the context it is clear that these words do not refer to the ultimate nibbāna which the arahant attains at the moment of death but to nibbāna in this life. So they probably mean no more than what is better described in M I 303: *Sukhāya . . . vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo pahātabbo, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo*, 'A tendency to desire is to be got rid of in pleasant feeling; a tendency to repulsion is to be got rid of in unpleasant feeling; a tendency to ignorance is to be got rid of in neutral feeling.' This looks more like the everyday state of mind of the arahant: perceptions and ideas come with their normal feeling-tones, but they are observed with complete objectivity and no emotional reaction is permitted. This is beautifully expressed in U 8: *tasmāt iha te Bāhiya evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati*, 'Then, Bāhiya, thus must you train yourself: in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just

the imagined, in the cognized just the cognized.' One of the most important purposes of meditational exercises was to create a permanent control over emotions and desires and a permanent state of calm. This is one aspect of nibbāna: it is happiness but without differentiated pleasures.

In A IV 414 ff we find a distinction between two types of *sukha*. First, Sāriputta says: *sukham idaṃ āvuso nibbānaṃ*, 'friends, this nibbāna is happiness'. One of the listening monks then asks: *Kiṃ pan' ettha āvuso Sāriputta sukhaṃ, yad ettha natthi vedayitan ti*? 'Friend Sāriputta, what is then here the happiness that is not felt in this (nibbāna)?' Sāriputta answers: 'It is this' (*etad*): *Pañc 'ime . . . kāmaguṇā*, 'these five types of sense pleasures', and, having enumerated them, he sums up: *idaṃ vuccat' āvuso kāmasukhaṃ*, 'friends, this is called the happiness of sense pleasures'. Then he goes on to describe the happiness of monks, *vivicc' eva kāmehi*, 'aloof from sense pleasures', and mentions the nine levels of meditation and winds up the discussion by saying that 'it is in this way that nibbāna should be understood as happiness (*sukhaṃ*)'. The word *sukha* is therefore used to denote both pleasures in the ordinary sense and the special type of pleasure resulting from meditation. Nibbāna is (or is accompanied by) a pleasant feeling of the latter type. The happiness of nibbāna is not called *vedanā*, because this normally leads to *tanhā*, 'desire'. How this manifests itself in consciousness is not further described, but just as cognition in this state is more intuitive and holistic and less differentiated, it is clear that the feeling is something like a calm, disinterested, undisturbed satisfaction.

This leads us to another common expression. SN 467 mentions the *tathāgata* (the Buddha) as: *parinibbuto udakarahado va sīto*, 'one who has attained nibbāna and is cool like the waters of a lake'. And the Buddha says about himself (M I 171): *eko' mhi sammāsambuddho, sītibhūto 'smi nibbuto*. 'I alone have attained the highest knowledge, I have become cool and have attained nibbāna.' This *sīta*, 'cool', is quite commonly used about arahants and was evidently felt to be a good description of the prevailing feeling-tone in connection with nibbāna. To feel 'cool' is pleasant in a tropical country, and to be personally uninvolved means internal freedom.

There are an additional number of emotional words mentioned in connection with nibbāna. For instance, SN 593, *sabbasokaṃ atikkanto asoko hoti nibbuto*, 'having overcome all grief, he is without grief and has attained nibbāna'. I 122, *phuṭṭhassa paramā santi nibbānaṃ akutobhayaṃ*, 'by him is reached the highest peace, nibbāna, with nothing to fear from anywhere'. Among the many synonyms for nibbāna mentioned in S IV 368 ff, some belong to the domain of feeling, e.g. *santaṃ*, 'peace'; *sivaṃ*, 'happiness'; *khemaṃ*, 'security'; *avyāpajjo*, 'kindness'. Another interesting synonym is given repeatedly, e.g. A IV 353: *anatta-saññī asmimānasamugghātaṃ pāpuṇāti diṭṭh'eva dhamme nibbānaṃ*, 'thinking "there is no soul", he attains freedom from the pride "I am", nibbāna in this life'.

In short, nibbāna is, from an emotional point of view defined (or said to be accompanied by) happiness, peace, security, calm, humility, and kindness. As it is also described as 'cool', we must probably imagine these feelings as rather disinterested and impersonal. This should be a description of the prevalent feeling-tone of the arahant, but this general freedom from *dukkha* did not prevent him from experiencing unpleasant things as unpleasant.

The dynamics of nibbāna

JUST as there are no strong emotions in nibbāna, there are few needs and no desires. We often find definitions to this effect. See, e.g. SN 707, *aniccho hoti nibbuto*, 'the wantless is in nibbāna', U 33: *sabbato tanhānaṃ khayā asesavirāganirodho nibbānaṃ*, 'By the destruction of desires, there is complete disinterest and cessation: nibbāna.' In S III 190, this is explained by means of a parable that cannot be misunderstood. Children play with little sand-castles as long as they are not free from desire and affection for them. But when this desire and affection has gone, then they destroy the castles without ever thinking of them again. Similarly we should lose our desire for the *khandhā* (the personality factors) and cease to play with them: *Tanhakkhayo hi nibbānaṃ*, 'for the destruction of desires is nibbāna'.

No human being can live without the motivating factors which psychologists call needs. The texts also silently assume that the arahants had these personal needs, of air, food, clothes, shelter, etc. and that a reasonable satisfaction of them was permitted. There are no definitions of nibbāna in terms of mortification. It is, however, frequently mentioned that an arahant was *appiccho*, 'wanting little' (e.g. S I 63, S II 202). By this expression the existence of needs is admitted, and we should carefully distinguish these legitimate and unavoidable needs from *tanhā* and *rāga* which are wholly incompatible with nibbāna.

We have already mentioned that the most important aspect of nibbāna is the destruction of the obsessions. One of the four obsessions is *kāma*, 'sense-pleasures', 'sense-desires'. As a good summary of the last three sections, the following definition may be quoted from S V 8: *Yo kho . . . rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idaṃ vuccati amataṃ.* 'That which is the destruction of desire, of hate, of illusion—that is called "the deathless".'

By *moha* is meant illusion or false cognition, by *dosa* is meant the emotion of aggressiveness, and *rāga* refers to the same desires that sometimes are called *tanhā*.

By definition, nibbāna is therefore freedom from the emotions and desires by which egoism and attachment is created: all definitions are in complete agreement on this point. This does not mean complete absence of motivation, nor passivity. The arahant is motivated by *paññā*, 'understanding', *mettā*, 'friendliness', and *karuṇā*, 'compassion'. An active and energetic frame of mind is frequently mentioned in descriptions of arahants: *ātāpī viharāmi*, 'I live active,' says an arahant about himself, Ta 1. Another arahant says, Ta 437, that he spends his time practising *satta bojjhaṅge indriyāni balāni ca*, 'the seven links of knowledge, the capacities and the powers', the usual names of three enumerations, all of which include *viriya*, 'energy'.

Nibbāna as state of personality

IN modern books about Buddhist philosophy we are generally told that human personality consists of the *khandhā*, 'personality factors': *rūpa*, 'body', *saññā*, 'ideation', *vedanā*, 'feeling', *sankhāra*, 'activity', and *viññāṇa*, 'consciousness'. This is not quite true, since the most important is *citta*, generally translated 'mind'. *Citta* is the core of personality, the centre of purposiveness, activity, continuity and emotionality. It is not a 'soul' (*attā*), but it is *the empirical, functional self*. It is mainly conscious but not restricted to the momentary conscious contents and processes. On the contrary, it includes all the layers of consciousness, even the unconscious: by it the continuity and identity are safeguarded. It has a distinctly individual form. Its original state is characterized by the defilements (*upakkilesā*, M I 36), the emotional imperfections and the obsessions (*āsavā*, D I 84). The whole gamut of Buddhist methods therefore aims at purifying the *citta*. If this purification is complete, nibbāna is attained: *Paññā-paribhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammad eva āsavehi vimuccati seyyathīdaṃ kāmāsavā bhavāsavā diṭṭhāsavā avijjāsavā* (D II 81), '*Citta*, when thoroughly developed through understanding, is quite set free from obsessions, namely from the obsessions of sensuality, becoming, views and ignorance.' This is expressed just as clearly in S III 45: *Rūpadhātuyā ce bhikkhave bhikkhuno cittam virattaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti anupādāya āsavehi . . . vimuttatā ṭhitaṃ, ṭhitattā santussitaṃ, santussitattā na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paccattaññeva parinibbāyati. Khīṇā jāti . . . ti pajānāti.* 'If a monk's *citta* is without need for the element of form (feeling, ideation, the activities, consciousness) and is released from it without attachment to the obsessions, it is immovable by its release: by its immobility it is satisfied; by its satisfaction it is not excited; without

excitement it by itself attains nibbāna. And it knows: "Destroyed is birth . . ."' This proves that nibbāna comes as a climax after a number of psychological events. Nibbāna is attained through a transformation of *citta*. We note also that even *paññā*, 'understanding', is attributed to *citta*. So is *aññā*, 'knowledge' (sometimes used for nibbāna, M I 63) in D III 53.

The perfect and purified *citta* is unemotional and stable (*vūpasanta*, 'calmed', D I 71, *danta gutta rakkhita saṃvuta*, 'tamed, controlled, guarded, restrained', A I 7).

When nibbāna was attained, the knowledge came that *citta* was free from all the disturbing factors. A clear distinction between conscious phenomena and the deeper personality factors was not often made. But it was made at least once, M I 523, where Ānanda is asked whether the arahant always knows that his obsessions are destroyed, and replies: . . . *tassa carato c'eva tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ khīṇā vā āsavā, api ca kho naṃ paccavekkhamāno jānāti: khīṇā me āsavā ti*, '. . . for him whether he is walking or standing or asleep or awake, the obsessions are certainly (I take *vā*=*eva*) destroyed, and moreover, when he thinks of it he knows: "My obsessions are destroyed."' This indicates that the early Buddhists, just as well as present-day psychologists, considered dynamic and emotional factors not only as factors of consciousness but also as more stable factors of personality. In nibbāna, therefore, not only the conscious state was changed, but the whole personality.

In the present section we are mainly concerned with definitions not covered in previous sections and referring directly to personality structure. We can distinguish three groups.

1. Descriptions in terms of moral achievements are few, partly because moral perfection was taken for granted as belonging to the elementary parts of the Way, partly because these problems are ultimately solved when their roots are destroyed: *kāma*, *rāga*, *dosa*, *tanhā*, etc. This aspect is, however, stressed in such synonyms for nibbāna as *suddhi*, 'purity' (S IV 372) and *asankiliṭṭha*, 'freedom from impurities' (M I 173).

2. Nibbāna is sometimes described in terms of freedom. In S IV 372, *mutti* and *anālaya*, both meaning 'release' or 'freedom', are given as synonyms for nibbāna. In S III 189 it is said:

vimutti . . . nibbānatthā, 'release means nibbāna'. And, according to S I 210, *nibbānaṃ Bhagavā āhu, sabbaganthappamocanaṃ*, 'Nibbāna, said the Master, is the deliverance from every tie.' See also M II 265: *etaṃ amataṃ yadidaṃ anupādā cittassa vimokho*, 'This is the deathless: the deliverance of the mind without grasping.' Now, *vimokha* is a technical term referring, among other things, to certain levels of meditation. In D II 71, the Buddha says that if a monk has mastered these levels and: *āsavānañ ca khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññā-vimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, ayaṃ vuccati . . . bhikkhu ubhatobhāga-vimutto, imāya ca . . . ubhatobhāga-vimuttiyā aññā ubhato-bhāga-vimutti uttaritarā vā paṇītatarā vā n'atthi*, 'by destroying the obsessions, enters and stays in that obsession-free liberation of mind and liberation by understanding which he by himself has come to know and see in this life—then this monk is called "freed in both ways" and there is no higher and more splendid "freedom-in-both-ways" than this'.

All these definitions and explanations are given in terms of freedom or liberation. Freedom can, of course, mean different things, e.g. (a) freedom from external obstacles, (b) conscious freedom, real or illusory, (c) freedom of personality, i.e. freedom from personal compulsions, obsessions and inhibitions that make a realistic and purposeful way of life impossible. The Buddha never means freedom in an external sense, although the monk-life was designed to achieve a maximum of external freedom. When he defines nibbāna as freedom, he attributes the freedom to *citta*. The enemies of freedom are, according to Buddhism, especially misconceptions about the world and ourselves, clinging to the world and to the renewed existence in it, immoral and compulsive habits, laziness, desires and emotions, fears and worries. These may be overcome either by insight (*paññā*) or by meditation, or, preferably, by both. Nibbāna is, as we have seen, sometimes defined as the internal freedom, attained by these means.

3. Of special interest to the psychologist are a number of definitions in terms of health. M I 511: *Evam-eva kho Māgandiya ahañ-c'eva te dhammaṃ deseyyaṃ: idan-taṃ ārogyaṃ, idan-taṃ nibbānanti, so tvaṃ ārogyaṃ jāneyyāsi nibbānaṃ passeyyāsi*,

'Even so, Māgandiya, if I were to teach you the doctrine, saying: "this is that health, this is that nibbāna", you might know health, might see nibbāna.' We find *abyādhi*, 'freedom from disease' as synonym for nibbāna in M I 173 and *anītika*, 'health', in S IV 371. In S III 4 f, Sāriputta explains how it is possible to have a healthy mind (*no āturacitto*) in spite of a sick body: a healthy mind is to have a correct insight as to the nature of the *khandhā* and to avoid identifying oneself with them. This definition is very similar to the explanation of *vimutti* given in S II 124 f, so nibbāna is both mental health and internal freedom. A comparison between the Buddhist conception of nibbāna and the modern Western idea of mental health will be made in a later section.

We have earlier left the question open whether nibbāna may be described as a psychological state or not. It follows from the discussion in this chapter that it has to be answered in the affirmative: nibbāna is the state of *citta* created when the obsessions and other imperfections have ultimately disappeared and have been replaced by understanding, peace and 'health'. What we have described so far in our attempts at definition is mainly the new state of *citta*. In describing nibbāna, the texts most frequently use this '*citta* terminology' but there is also another, less frequent and more elusive '*viññāṇa* terminology'.

Nibbāna as emptiness

It is said (M III 293 f) that once when Sāriputta approached the Buddha after an afternoon of meditation, the latter commented on his calm expression and his pure and clear complexion. Sāriputta gave this explanation: *Suññatāvihārena kho ahaṃ, bhante, etarahi bahulaṃ viharāmīti*, 'Sir, I am now completely absorbed in the state of emptiness.' This got the approval of the Buddha who called emptiness the state of great men (*mahāpurisavihāra*). Now, what is meant by 'state of emptiness'?

It is not further explained in the continuation of the text, so we must look for other cues. We can find two explanations. The first possibility is the *emptiness of consciousness* that is developed through concentration. Our text says that Sāriputta had just emerged from solitary meditation. In A V 301 Sāriputta makes exactly the same comment to Anuruddha about his calm expression, etc. But he gets a different explanation: 'My mind is well established in the four states of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).' This parallel indicates at least that exercises in mindfulness could give the same visible result as emptiness. But there is also more direct evidence that meditation will produce a state of emptiness. In S IV 360 the question is asked: what is the path that goes to the uncompounded (referring to nibbāna)? The answer is: *Suññato samādhi animitto samādhi appaṇihito samādhi*, 'the concentration that is empty, signless and undirected'. We shall have more to say about the levels of concentration later, but we are here reminded of the fact that the general trend of these levels is to reduce the amount of conscious contents, until the mind is completely motionless and empty: one of the levels is called *ākiñcaññāyatana*, 'the dimension of nothingness'. And in M III 111, the Buddha says: *Ayaṃ kho pan', Ānanda, vihāro Tathāgatena abhisambuddho, yadidaṃ sabbanimittānaṃ amanasikārā ajjhattaṃ suññataṃ upasampajja viharituṃ*. 'But, Ānanda, Tathāgata has completely understood this

state, namely how to attain and stay in the inward emptiness, by leaving all signs unnoticed.' It is evident from these examples, that the word emptiness was used with reference to a psychological state attainable through meditation.

It was, on the other hand, also used about *nibbāna*. We can see the difference in M III 104-108, where all the levels of concentration are described as levels of progressing emptiness. A monk starts to meditate in a forest, and then he sees only the forest, no village and no people: *Iti yaṃ hi kho tattha na hoti, tena taṃ suññaṃ samanupassati*, 'for he regards it as empty of that which is not there'. Then he passes through the eight first levels and attains *animittaṃ cetosamādhiṃ*, 'the concentration of mind that is signless'. And the text continues: *So evaṃ pajānāti: Ayam pi kho animitto cetosamādhi abhisankhato abhisañcetayito. Yaṃ kho pana kiñci abhisankhataṃ abhisañcetayitaṃ, tad aniccaṃ nirodhadhamman ti pajānāti. Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, bhavāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati, avijjāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati.* 'He understands: "This signless concentration of mind is made up and intended (willed). But whatever is made up and intended, that is impermanent and perishable." When he understands and sees this, then his mind is freed from the obsession of sensuality, from the obsession of becoming and from the obsession of ignorance.' Then comes the arahant-formula, so it is clear that this is a description of the attainment of nibbāna. This is finally expressed in terms of emptiness: *So: suññam idaṃ saññāgataṃ kāmāsavenāti pajānāti; suññam idam saññāgataṃ bhavāsavenāti pajānāti; suññam idaṃ saññāgataṃ avijjāsavenāti pajānāti. Atthi c'ev 'idaṃ asuññataṃ, yadidaṃ imam eva kāyaṃ paṭicca saḷāyatanikaṃ jīvitapaccayā ti.* 'He understands: this conscious state is empty of the obsession of sensuality. He understands: this conscious state is empty of the obsession of becoming. He understands: this conscious state is empty of the obsession of ignorance. And there is only this that is not empty, namely the six sensory fields that, conditioned by life, are grounded on this body itself.'

We understand from these quotations that there are different levels of emptiness and that a sharp distinction was made between meditation and nibbāna: in meditation a 'signless emp-

tiness' can be attained, but this is still 'put together' and 'willed' and therefore impermanent and of short duration. The obsessions are still not conquered. But when the obsessions cease, a new type of emptiness is reached, which is difficult to define psychologically. But in any case it is no longer a temporary state of undifferentiated consciousness but rather a permanent state of *citta*, 'mind' (especially the deeper layers of consciousness and the centre of personality): a freedom from sensuality, ignorance and the causal conditions for rebirth. We shall find time and again that nibbāna cannot be understood without this distinction between the unstable, rapidly changing *surface* and the deep, unchanging *background*.

The difference between the two types of emptiness is sharply formulated in this text, but that is not always the case. Very often we get the impression that emptiness as a conscious state is a very important aspect of nibbāna itself (and not only as a preparation for it). When the arahant Uttamā calls herself *suññatassānimittassa lābhinī* (Ti 46), 'winner of the emptiness and signless', she is certainly not referring to the highest level of meditation but to nibbāna. One of the synonyms for nibbāna in the long list, S IV 368 ff, is *anidassanaṃ* 'without attributes'. In A V 107 it is said: *nibbānapariyosānā sabbe dhammā*, 'all conscious processes have nibbāna as their end' (this translation is doubtful, since *dhamma* has many meanings, of which the one given here is the most normal, and since *pariyosānā* may mean 'perfection' as well). In M I 296 nibbāna is called *animittā dhātu*, 'the signless state (or: element, realm)'.

The most probable explanation of this is that the highest level of meditation (*saññāvedayitanirodha*, 'the ceasing of ideation and feeling') was used so frequently as a stepping-stone to the realization of nibbāna, that some of its characteristics were transferred to nibbāna itself, especially the experience of undifferentiated wholeness that is called *suññatā*. At first, this looks like a simple confusion of two psychological states, which must have been closely related in any case, but if we search further we will find a much closer connection. The attainment of nibbāna is namely also called *viññāṇassa nirodho*, 'the cessation of consciousness' (SN 734). And nibbāna had to be exactly that, since rebirth is effected through the medium of

viññāṇa and nibbāna is the cessation of rebirth. The exact meaning of this will be discussed later, but it seems clear that the stream of conscious processes, of which *viññāṇa* consists, is stopped and emptied, usually by means of the meditational exercises, but perhaps also through insight (*paññā*). What happens can be best expressed in terms of our distinction above, between surface and background. Exercises in concentration concern mainly the surface, but they are a tool towards the formation of a certain type of background experience: security, peace, timelessness, 'emptiness', which is the 'stopped' *viññāṇa* and does not prevent correct perception and clear thinking on the surface.

To sum up: There are two types of emptiness, one emptiness of surface-consciousness which is attained by means of concentration, and one emptiness of *citta* which consists of the constant freedom from the obsessions and includes also the 'stopping' of *viññāṇa*: the second type is nibbāna or one aspect of it.

Nibbāna as cessation of rebirth

Bhavanirodho nibbānaṃ (S II 117), 'the cessation of becoming (=rebirth) is nibbāna'. In SN 467 nibbāna is called *jātimaraṇassa antaṃ*, 'the end of birth and death'. This is the same as *anto dukkhassa* (U 80), 'the end of suffering', since suffering is defined (D II 305) as birth, old age, death, grief, sorrow, lamentation and despair. One of the basic constituents of suffering is then the prospect of rebirth, and one of the most important results of the attainment of nibbāna is that the chain of births is broken for that individual. The order of the words 'birth', 'old age' and 'death' should be noted, because this is quite consistent in the texts. There is a reason for this. Cf., for instance, M I 49: *jātisamudayā jarāmaraṇasamudayo, jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇanirodho*, 'Because of the event of birth comes the event of old age and death, because of the stopping of birth comes the stopping of old age and death.' The meaning is clearly that nibbāna will not save from old age and physical death *in this life* but only from a new birth and the old age and death that would have followed upon it. Contexts of this type give us a clue to the proper interpretation of texts like M I 173: . . . *jātidhammā samānā jātidhamme ādīnavaṃ viditvā ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ pariyesamānā ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ ajjhagamaṃsu*, 'Being liable to birth, but having understood the peril in being liable to birth and looking for freedom from birth, the incomparable security, nibbāna, they attained freedom from birth, the incomparable security, nibbāna.' Then exactly the same is repeated for the following opposites: *jarā—ajaraṃ, byādhi—abyādhiṃ, maraṇa—amataṃ, soka—asokaṃ, sankilesa—asankiliṭṭhaṃ*, 'old age—freedom from old age, illness—freedom from illness, death—freedom from death, sorrow—freedom from sorrow, impurity—free-

dom from impurity'. The words *ajāta*, *ajara* and *amata* are frequently translated 'unborn', 'unageing' and 'deathless'. Translated in this way they can easily be understood as referring to nibbāna as something substantial having the attributes of not having been born, not growing old and never dying—and this is exactly what has happened. That this interpretation was not intended can be seen from M I 173: *ajātaṃ* is contrasted to *jātidhammā samānā*, 'being liable to birth', which can only refer to the personal liability of these five monks to die and their personal freedom from birth in the future. And *amataṃ* as contrasted to *maraṇadhammā samānā* can only refer to their personal freedom from death in the future as contrasted to their present liability to death. They would evidently not be helped by anything external having these traits of being unborn, unageing and deathless. Rather, life after the attainment of nibbāna is referred to as going on under new conditions and new expectations: no more birth and therefore no more ageing and death. It is significant that nibbāna here is called *yogakkhema*, 'security' which clearly refers to a state and not a substance, and reminds us of other synonyms for nibbāna, e.g. *ārogya*, 'health' (M I 511) and *anālaya*, 'freedom' (S IV 372).

This side of nibbāna, the cessation of *samsāra*, is not empirical in the ordinary sense, as it cannot be described or explained by psychology or any other science. But all the methods that were used to attain nibbāna are said to lead to this effect, and these methods can be understood. It is also said that the effective medium of rebirth is *viññāṇa*, 'consciousness'. The attainment of nibbāna involves, as has already been mentioned, the 'stopping of *viññāṇa*', which leads to the stopping of rebirth, just as the stopping of a car leads to the stopping of the journey. A proper understanding of this process may be attained by a close study of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series, the series of dependent origination consisting of twelve factors of which the eleventh is *jāti* and the twelfth includes *jarā-maraṇaṃ*. The origination of these is said to depend on the other factors, of which *viññāṇa* is one. By means of the 'cessation' (*nirodha*) of these, birth, old age and death will also cease. Although the cessation of birth cannot be understood by means of psychology, the methods leading to the cessation of *viññāṇa* can still be followed and described, and

a better understanding of the meaning of this cessation can still be reached through a study of the texts. And it should finally not be forgotten that to an arahant who was very proficient in meditation, the process and causal connection were no secrets: rebirth and the law of *kamma* were to him empirical facts.

The criteria of transcendence

CAN the limits of ordinary human experience be transcended? Can we learn to know the world 'as it really is', i.e. independently of the human sense organs, which are known to give only a very limited and distorted knowledge of the world? Many philosophers have held the view that by means of metaphysics we can attain such transcendent knowledge and even make deductions about, or intuitively see the ultimate principle of existence. Our next question is whether the Buddha believed in such transcendent knowledge and whether he considered nibbāna to be a metaphysical entity.

Generally speaking, the boundaries of our knowledge are not definitive and inflexible. Atoms are too small for us to see, but still we know much about them. By means of suitable technical equipment it has proved possible to collect much knowledge that was unattainable without it. Thus the boundary between empirical and metaphysical knowledge has been somewhat changed.

The Buddha did not know about this method of extending human knowledge, but there might be others. The boundaries of the senses are also somewhat flexible, since some people have sharper vision or more sensitive ears than others. There might further be a special sense of 'intuition', and some psychologists even today believe in 'extrasensory perception', e.g. telepathy, by means of which our ordinary sense knowledge could be transcended. These possibilities are not taken very seriously today, but in the system of early Buddhism they play an important part. By means of the six *abhiññā*, powers that could be attained through meditation, the disciple could, e.g. read the minds of other persons, remember his own former existences, and see how other beings are reborn according to the law of *kamma*. He could, briefly, check for himself all the basic teachings of Buddhism: they became *empirical* knowledge to him.

We should note that when the *abiññā* are enumerated (e.g. D III 281), *āsavakkhaya*, i.e. the attainment of nibbāna, is mentioned as no. 6. In these contexts nibbāna is therefore said to be attained by means of superknowledge, a type of knowledge that may be regarded as empirical for the adepts but as transcendent for others. In other contexts, and they are much more frequent, the final act of insight is, as we have seen, achieved through *paññā*, which is not a supernatural faculty.

There were certainly beliefs in early Buddhism that transcended ordinary sense knowledge, especially the existence of gods (which was never denied but was considered very unimportant), the law of *samsāra* and the principle of moral causality. Suffering was an empirical fact but some of its causes were transcendent. Through nibbāna the causes could be eradicated. Must nibbāna therefore be something transcendent? This does not necessarily follow, since we have the causes leading to renewed life within us in this life. If we learn how to neutralize these causes in our present life, then there will be no basis (*upādāna*) for new becoming (*bhava*). The problem of suffering can be solved without a transcendent agency.

Although it does not seem to follow from the human situation that nibbāna has to be a transcendent fact, there is no doubt that it was considered to be a metaphysical entity in later Buddhism. Our task is now to see whether this was the case already in the Nikāya Buddhism.

The criteria of transcendence would seem to be the following:

1. One argument would be that it is not possible to get in touch with anything transcendent without developing a special sense for this purpose: it is, e.g. not possible to see God with our ordinary eyes, so we must develop 'spiritual' eyes. Does the Buddha ever speak about a special sense for experiencing nibbāna?

The answer is, on the whole, no. Possibilities in this direction are offered by the use of words like *paññācakkhu*, 'eye of understanding', and *ariyacakkhu*, 'noble eye', which sometimes are used to describe the attainment of nibbāna. The Buddha says, e.g. M I 510, *Taṃ hi te Māgandiya ariyaṃ cakkhuṃ na-tthi yena tvaṃ ariyena cakkhunā ārogyaṃ jāneyyāsi nibbānaṃ passeyyāsīti*, 'So you, Māgandiya, have not got that noble eye, by

which you might know health, might see nibbāna.' I 52 says that there are three types of eyes: *maṃsacakkhu, dibbacakkhu, paññācakkhu*, 'the bodily eye, the divine eye, and the eye of understanding'. About *paññācakkhu* it is said:

yato ñāṇaṃ udapādi
paññācakkhu anuttaraṃ,
yassa cakkhussa paṭilābhā
sabbadukkhā pamuccati.

'The eye of understanding, from which knowledge arose, is unsurpassed. Whoever acquires this eye becomes free from all suffering.'

There is no further information about the development of these 'eyes' or any indication that they should be understood in a literal sense. Probably they should be understood as metaphorical expressions for 'vision' or 'knowledge' of a certain type (this could of course very well be of transcendent or supernatural content).

Jayatilleke, who has devoted an authoritative study to the question of the early Buddhist view of knowledge (4), has arrived at the opinion that the Nikāya Buddhism was empiristic and did not recognize any special 'mystic' source of knowledge. 'Buddhism does not make the claim of the mystic that his knowledge was derived from a supernatural source' (4, p. 426). 'The approach of Buddhism results . . . in the elimination of metaphysics' (4, p. 433). The term 'empiricism' must, however, be understood in a wider sense than is usually accepted nowadays. Knowledge based on extrasensory perception must be included, and it must be recognized that this source of knowledge can be developed through meditation. 'There is causal relation between the attainment of mental concentration and the emergence of this knowledge and insight' (4, p. 418). 'It is a natural and not a supernatural occurrence' (4, p. 420). As it is said in A V 3 and 313, *Dhammatā esā . . . yaṃ samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati*, 'It is in the nature of things that a person in a state of concentration knows and sees what really is.' According to M I 296, on the highest level of meditation: *indriyāni vippasannāni*, 'the sense functions are purified',

which suggests a finer and more accurate perception but not the development of a new and radically different sense function. In M I 169, the Buddha tells us what he considers important for a disciple in order to understand his doctrine: *paṇḍito . . . medhāvī . . . apparajākkhajātiko . . . so imaṃ dhammaṃ khippam-eva ājānissati*, 'He is wise, intelligent and with little defilements: he will understand this doctrine very soon.' There is no mention of any special sense or mystic ability.

In this discussion we have found no evidence that nibbāna, as object of the ordinary, although trained, instruments of knowledge, was thought to be a metaphysical entity.

2. Mystics frequently stress the indescribable or even inconceivable nature of the absolute and their experiences of the absolute. According to some writers about Buddhism, e.g. N. Dutt (2, p. 279 f), inconceivability is one of the most prominent features of nibbāna. One of his main supports for this statement is the use of *nippapañca*, by him translated as 'inexpressible'. I have found this word referring to nibbāna only in S IV 370, where the word itself is not beyond doubt; its meaning is still more doubtful, and the PTS dictionary admits only the meanings 'free from diffuseness' and 'free from illusion'.

Dutt is a bit unlucky also with most of his further quotations collected to prove this point. He quotes, e.g. SN 1076: *Atthaṃ gatassa na pamāṇam atthi, yena naṃ vajju, taṃ tassa n'atthi.* This sounds convincing if you translate: 'That which disappears is immeasurable, i.e. infinite, and hence there are no words by which it can be spoken of.' When you, however, find out that the stanza refers, not to nibbāna, but to the dead arahant, it becomes clear that it does not prove the inconceivability of nibbāna.

His reference M I 167, 'it is profound, hard to comprehend, serene, excellent, beyond dialectics, abstruse, and that it is only to be realized by the wise within one's own self' (Dutt's transl.) refers to *dhamma* and not to nibbāna. It tells us that the doctrine is intellectually hard to grasp but that it can be understood if you are wise. But the same page *does* say about nibbāna that it is *ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ*, 'freedom from birth, incomparable, perfect peace' and that it is *ṭhānaṃ duddasaṃ*, 'a matter difficult to see'. This agrees well with other

similar pronouncements. S IV 369 has, among many other synonyms of nibbāna, some which belong here: *nipuṇaṃ*, 'subtle', *sududdasaṃ*, 'very difficult to see', and *anidassanaṃ*, 'without attribute'.

In short, the oldest literature has expressed the idea that nibbāna is difficult to realize but not that it is difficult to describe. The difficulties to grasp nibbāna do, however, not prove its metaphysical nature, as there are many experiences in normal conscious life that are found elusive and hard to grasp.

3. Negative descriptions of the Absolute are common in all mystic religions. 'The typical theology of the mystics is summed up in the phrase used of the teaching of Plotinus, "the negative theology of positive transcendence' " (Spencer, 10, p. 236). The use of a negative terminology is also quite striking in Buddhism and has been strongly stressed by various writers. 'The most consistently negative of all the mystics was, perhaps, Gotama the Buddha (following the Pali Canon)' (Spencer, 10, p. 327). 'All that he could say about it was by negatives' (Dutt, 2, p. 279).

From the material already quoted, this would seem somewhat exaggerated. Perhaps we can obtain more realistic proportions by looking at the biggest collection of synonyms of nibbāna that has been recorded, namely S IV 368-372. Here 32 synonyms for nibbāna are given, 10 of which are negative in form. Among the positive words we find *antaṃ*, 'the end', *saccaṃ*, 'the truth', *dhuvaṃ*, 'the stable', *santaṃ*, 'peace', *sivaṃ*, 'happiness', *khemaṃ*, 'security', *suddhi*, 'purity', *mutti*, 'release', *dīpa*, 'the island', *leṇa*, 'the cave', etc. In order to get a clearer picture of the negative terminology, let us start by investigating what exactly is negated.

(a) One group of negations seem to refer to the social world. This world is crowded, full of disturbance, trouble and fear. Nibbāna, on the contrary, is *asambādha*, 'uncrowded', *akhalita*, 'undisturbed', *nirupatāpa*, 'untroubled', and *abhaya*, 'free from fear'. These negatives seem mainly to express the feeling of safety that nibbāna inspires: it is free from all nuisance and disturbance.

(b) Then we find a group concerning our personal conditions of life. We humans are certainly subjected to birth, becoming,

creation, compounding, illness, obstruction, old age and death. Nibbāna, on the other hand, is *ajāta*, 'freedom from birth', *abhūta*, 'freedom from becoming', *akata*, 'freedom from creation', *asankhata*, 'freedom from compounding'[1], *abyādhi*, 'without illness', *anītika*, 'without illness', *anālaya*, 'freedom', *ajara*, 'freedom from old age', *amata* or *amara*, 'deathless'. This group looks like a negation of the conventional definition of *dukkha*. It seems to describe a perfectly static, and at the same time ideal state, where everything is permanently well.

(c) If this is true about the general conditions of life, it is also true about the ethical state. In contrast to the hostility, aggression and impurities of this world, nibbāna is *asapatta*, 'without hostility', *avyāpajja*, 'harmless', and *asankiliṭṭha*, 'without impurities'.

(d) We have also a group of entirely psychological attributes, corresponding to our previous findings. In this world, our consciousness is characterized by ignorance and wrong views: diffuseness and illusion, grief, sensuality, fear and desires. In nibbāna these are eradicated: nibbāna is *anāsava*, 'without obsessions', *nippapañca*, 'without diffuseness or illusion', *asoka*, 'free from sorrow', *abhaya*, 'without fear', *virāga*, 'without desire'.

The last two points describe nibbāna as a state of ethical perfection and a conscious state of realism, knowledge, calm, and detachment.

(e) It is of particular interest to see whether nibbāna was contrasted to the physical world and described in terms of negations of this world. It is difficult to find any clear examples of this. The Buddha spoke mainly about human conditions and human achievements. The negations *asankhata*, *abhūta*, *akata*, mentioned above, are usually referred to the 'physical' group and translated, 'uncompounded', 'not become', 'not made'. Seen in their context, U 80, it turns out that they too must refer to human conditions. We have also the negations *asankuppa*, unchangeable', and *anidassana*, 'without attribute', but they probably describe the psychological state which is a characteristic of nibbāna, and therefore contrast nibbāna to the usual way of experiencing and not to the physical world. Seen in isolation

[1] These translations are somewhat unconventional. They will be discussed on p. 39 and p. 53f.

the mentioned negations could be taken as evidence that the Buddha believed in a metaphysical 'antiworld'—but since they are ambiguous they have to be fitted into the totality.

(The attributes or synonyms for nibbāna quoted here are mainly drawn from S IV 368 ff, M I 173, SN 1149, A II 247, U 80, and Ti 512.)

This negatively conceived nibbāna is maybe partly a construction. It is easy to notice the opposites in our world, and the linguistic arrangement of attributes in pairs of opposites proves the prevalence of thinking in opposites. It is also easy to detect the imperfections of our world and to project an image of its absolute opposite. We can construct a conclusion by analogy in this way:

Observations	*Opposites*	
cold	warm	Observed opposites
bad	good	
pain	pleasure	
hostile	friendly	
changing	permanent	Deduced opposites
death	immortality	
birth	no birth	
conditioned	unconditioned	

From the observed opposites in our world it is tempting to conclude that there must be real equivalents also to the phenomena that lack observable opposites in our world. While we have no proof that Buddhism to any extent built its idea about nibbāna by this type of analogical reasoning, we know that the Buddha liked to express himself in opposites. We shall quote one example: *Idha bhikkhave ekacco attanā jātidhammo samāno jātidhamme ādīnavaṃ viditvā ajātaṃ anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ pariyesati* (M I 162 f). 'Here someone, being liable to birth because of himself, having known the peril in what is liable to birth, seeks the birthless, incomparable, perfect peace.' And the text goes on with the following opposites: *jarādhammo—ajaraṃ, byādhidhammo—abyādhiṃ, maraṇadhammo—amataṃ, sokadhammo—asokaṃ, sankilesadhammo—asan-*

kiliṭṭhaṃ, i.e. 'ageing—ageless, decay—undecaying, dying—deathless, sorrow—unsorrowing, stain—stainless'.

4. A fourth criterion of a transcendent reality is to be found in the content of the descriptions. Characteristically it is said that this reality is supernatural, independent and unconditioned. It is said to be the real nature behind the things as we see them or to be the law or principle governing the world.

Now it has already been pointed out that a very large part of the definitions and explanations given in the literature are formulated in psychological, personal terms. From a logical point of view, we cannot have it both ways: if nibbāna is an act of perception, it cannot at the same time be the object seen, and if it is a conscious content, it cannot also be the universe in which this consciousness works. Still, it would be *understandable* if a conscious process were projected on the external dimension and believed to be some external fact.

A process of this type would be especially natural in Buddhism which simply did not distinguish clearly between the external and the internal world. As I have tried to show earlier (6), the language of the Nikāyas uses the same word for the physical stimuli (*rūpa*, *sadda*, etc.) and their perceptual counterparts. Conscious functions have a certain freedom from the body. During a dream, the *jīva*, 'life-centre' (consisting of life, heat, and consciousness, D II 338) may leave the body in invisible form: '*Api nu tā tumhaṃ jīvaṃ passanti pavisantaṃ vā nikkhamantaṃ vā ti?*'—'*No h'idaṃ bho Kassapa.*' 'Do they see your life-centre entering or leaving you?'—'No' (D II 333). Some of the supernatural forms of knowledge (*abhiññā*) may be understood as ideations interpreted as *real*. The sixth sense (*mano*) is not treated as different from other senses, and there are few indications (e.g. SN 360, quoted previously) that the *dhammā*, that is, the ideations perceived by *mano*, were considered to be of more doubtful reality than other sense-perceptions. *Ceto* (the 'mind', more or less identical with *citta*) can be directed outwards like radio beams, and the whole world can in successive segments be suffused *mettāsahagatena cetasā*, 'with a mind full of friendship' (D I 251) and other feelings. This was considered to be a real influence.

This seems to indicate that the difference between internal

and external, conscious and substantial, is smaller in Buddhism than we are used to believe now. An idea that we would call purely conscious could therefore easily by the Buddhists be conceived as 'real' in an external, independent sense.

More conclusive and important evidence for this tendency to objectify mental phenomena can be found in the levels of meditation. From the descriptions of these levels, there can be no doubt that they are entirely subjective states of consciousness. However, they are also objectified and described as real worlds or dimensions of existence. There are living beings in these worlds and it is possible to be reborn there. See, e.g. A I 267 *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo sabbaso rūpasaññānaṃ samatikkamā, paṭighasaññānaṃ atthagamā, nānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā ananto ākāso ti ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. So tad assādeti tan nikāmeti tena ca vittiṃ āpajjati. Tatra ṭhito adhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno ākāsanañcāyatanūpagānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyataṃ uppajjati.* 'Herein, a certain person, by passing completely beyond consciousness of form, by the disappearance of consciousness of resistance, by paying no attention to consciousness of manifoldness, thinks, "Space is infinite", and reaches up to and stays in the sphere of infinite space. He enjoys it, wants it and finds happiness therein. Established therein, given thereto, generally spending his time therein and not falling away therefrom, when he makes an end, he is reborn in the company of the gods who have reached the sphere of infinite space.' The same is said, here and elsewhere, about other levels of meditation. Generally gods are said to live in these spheres, and it is interesting to note that the life-span of these beings are said to be longer as the levels become less differentiated.

Now this would make a perfect system, if also the highest level of meditation, *saññāvedayitanirodha*, were included and identified with nibbāna. Then, nibbāna would be quite clearly described as a transcendent world which the adept could reach by meditation and in which he could stay forever. Just as the other levels it would be a special dimension coexisting with but intersecting our world.

However, *saññāvedayitanirodha* is not included and it is not identified with nibbāna. There are texts that would seem

to imply at least a very close relationship (see, e.g. the first part of U 80, quoted in the next chapter), but they are exceptions. *Nirodha* is frequently mentioned as an aid to the attainment of nibbāna; but nibbāna can be attained on the other levels just as well, even without meditation: what is important is the destruction of the obsessions.

Nibbāna could also be a metaphysical reality of a different type: the principle of our existence or the real nature of the world, the absolute reality behind the changing phenomena. The text most often referred to as a proof of this interpretation is U 80. We will discuss it in a separate chapter.

A discussion of U 80

THIS famous page is certainly one of the most frequently quoted pages in the entire Buddhist literature. It consists of three sections (followed, on p. 81, by one much less famous), preceded by an introduction which tells us that the discourse was centred on nibbāna. We shall discuss each of the sections in turn.

1. *Atthi bhikkhave tad āyatanaṃ, yattha n'eva paṭhavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ na viññāṇānañcāyatanaṃ na ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ n'āyaṃ loko na paraloko ubho candimasūriyā, tad ahaṃ bhikkhave n'eva āgatiṃ vadāmi na gatiṃ na ṭhitiṃ na cutiṃ na upapattiṃ appatiṭṭhaṃ appavattaṃ anārammaṇam eva taṃ, es' ev' anto dukkhassā' ti.* 'There is that sphere wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun; this I say is free from coming and going, from duration and decay; there is no beginning and no establishment, no result and no cause; this indeed is the end of suffering.'

In this section, the word *āyatana* is used referring both to some of the levels of meditation (numbers 5 to 8 inclusive) and to nibbāna (not mentioned in the quoted part but in the introduction). As the ninth level (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) is missing, it would seem logical to assume that the section refers to this—but it is not said so. On the other hand, *anto dukkhassa* can refer only to nibbāna. Thus formally an identification of nibbāna with the highest level of meditation is avoided here as everywhere else. The description itself seems to admit two interpretations: (a) an objective world or dimension of existence, where the objects and conditions of this world are not found, where the eight first levels of meditation (which are often objectified

to dimensions of existence) are also left behind, and where there is no rebirth, no death and no suffering; (b) a subjective experience of the type cultivated in meditation, an experience in which all the distinctions of this world have disappeared and in which our ordinary conceptual structure simply does not apply: an experience of unity and completeness, absolute stillness and timelessness.

The former interpretation seems to be confirmed by U 55, where it is said: *evam eva kho bhikkhave bahū ce pi bhikkhū anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti, na tena nibbānadhātuyā ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati.* (Just as the ocean does not shrink or overflow) 'even so, though many monks pass finally away in that condition of nibbāna without any attachment left, yet there is neither shrinkage nor overflow in that condition of nibbāna seen thereby'. The idea is evidently that everybody attains *the same* nibbāna. That there is no change of volume is presented as a strange fact, but no explanation is given.

However these two texts are to be understood, it is clear that they both imply a spatial conception of nibbāna. Now we know about two types of space, an internal, conscious, space, and an external, 'objective', space. The former was a normal experience during meditation and is frequently described. Although nibbāna is not identified with any meditational state, the spatial type of experience may in these texts have been transferred to nibbāna.

This problem can probably best be solved by referring to another famous passage, D I 223, which will be discussed more in detail later (p. 76). It says that in the *viññāṇa* (consciousness) of the arahant 'water, earth, fire and wind find no footing; there long and short, fine and coarse, pleasant and unpleasant... stop without remainder'. This text seems to be a description of a *viññāṇa* that has 'stopped' and does not flow any more and therefore will not be instrumental in any further rebirth. In every arahant this 'stopping' must have occurred, either by means of meditation or by means of *paññā*, 'understanding', only. As this passage is quite similar to U 80 : 1, it seems probable that both refer to the same experience: it is the consciousness of the arahant that is described. But they do not refer to a vision or a state of short duration, like *saññāvedayitanirodha*,

but to a deeper and more permanent level of consciousness, which can be characterized as a background of understanding, calm confidence and freedom from desires: this is sometimes also called emptiness and signlessness, as we have seen earlier. This is not a state of meditation but it may be produced by means of meditation.

2. *Duddasaṃ anattaṃ nāma, na hi saccaṃ sudassanaṃ; paṭividdhā tanhā jānato, passato n'atthi kiñcanan ti.* 'The selfless is difficult to see, for truth is not easy to see. Craving is pierced for him who knows; for him who sees, nothing is.'

This section is very vague, and it is not known for sure whether *anattaṃ* (the word itself is doubtful) and *kiñcanaṃ* refer to nibbāna. The word *saccaṃ* is frequently used about nibbāna (cf. similar definitions in M III 245: *paramaṃ ariyasaccaṃ*, 'the highest truth', and S IV 369, *nipunaṃ*, 'the subtle'. The phrase *n'atthi kiñcanaṃ* reminds us of the adjective *akiñcana*, sometimes used about nibbāna (e.g. SN 1093) or about the arahant (e.g. Dh 421, where both expressions are combined). It seems most frequently to mean freedom from worldly possessions but may also refer to other things missing in nibbāna, e.g. impurities and obsessions, or simply the *tanhā* mentioned just before. The presence of *tanhā* and *anatta* in the quotation suggests that psychological facts are referred to, not some external, metaphysical truth. If this is correct, the section could be paraphrased like this: 'The impersonal state is real (*saccaṃ*) but difficult to experience. The arahant has extinguished his desire and has nothing left (of it, or of worldly possessions, or of the obsessions).'

3. *Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asankhataṃ, no ce taṃ bhikkhave abhavissa ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asankhataṃ, na yidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa sankhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyetha. Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asankhataṃ, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa sankhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyati*, 'Monks, there is a not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded (condition). Monks, if that not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded (condition) were not, no escape from the born, become, made, compounded (condition) had been known here. But, monks, since there is a not-born, not-become, not-made, not-compounded (condition),

therefore an escape from the born, become, made, compounded (condition) is known.'

The adjectives are without a noun, and the interpretation depends on what noun is implied. The most probable alternative is *padaṃ* which is frequently found in similar contexts, *nibbāna-padaṃ, accutaṃ padaṃ, asankhataṃ padaṃ*, etc. The word itself means 'step' and is therefore a word of the same class as nibbāna itself, a word signifying a transition, a change, a transformation. According to the dictionary it has also modal meanings, like 'principle', 'characteristic', 'thing', 'element'. Since one of the main functions of nibbāna is to transfer the human being from liability to rebirth to freedom from this expectation, a word like 'condition' seems to be the proper translation. This topic was discussed in the section about nibbāna and rebirth with reference to M I 173, where the negations *ajātaṃ, ajaraṃ, amataṃ* were translated 'freedom from birth, from old age, from death'. In the last-mentioned passage it is more self-evident that the Buddha was referring to *personal conditions* before and after the attainment of nibbāna and our translation therefore may seem more natural. Still, the similarity of the two passages is great and there is no reason to assume that the Buddha in this case has abandoned his habit to speak about human conditions and instead is speaking about metaphysical things in which he never professed any interest. The passage in U 80 starts with the common negation *ajātaṃ*, and the following, less common, words look like an elaboration of it: freedom from birth, from becoming, from creation, and from compounding.

The most commonly found translation is: 'There is[1] something not-born, not-become', etc., and this is commonly explained as referring to nibbāna as a metaphysical reality, something absolute, eternal and uncompounded, the truth behind the phenomena. We can arrive at this translation also if we add *padaṃ*, since this word also can mean 'element', as we pointed out above.

[1] The statement of Dutt (2, p. 288): 'By the use of the word "*atthi*", it shows that Nibbāna is an ens and not a non-ens'—is, of course, nonsense. '*Atthi*' can be used about anything, things, processes, ideas, illusions, and no conclusions can be drawn about the nature of its subject. Cf. U 80, quotation no. 2: *n'atthi kiñcanaṃ*, 'there is nothing', and the many examples in D II 299 f, e.g. *atthi vedanā*, 'there is feeling', *atthi . . . kāmacchando*, 'there is . . . sensuous desire'.

It is, however, not justified to draw such a conclusion from an isolated passage where the most important word is missing. It is possible that this passage, which is so ambiguous in meaning, is one of the starting points for the development of Buddhism as a metaphysical theory. When it was forgotten that participles like *amata, ajāta, asankhata*, etc., had a personal reference, it was easy to give them the concrete, literal meaning as referring to some concrete reality outside the person, especially since nibbāna really was something impersonal (*an-atta*), although not concrete and not outside the person. Historical speculations are, however, outside the scope of the present study.

4. *Nissitassa ca calitaṃ, anissitassa calitaṃ n'atthi, calite asati passaddhi, passadhiyā sati rati na hoti, ratiyā asati āgati-gati na hoti, āgati-gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti, cutūpapāte asati n'ev'idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantare, es'ev'anto dukkhassā 'ti.* 'For him who has attachment, there is unsteadiness; for the unattached there is no unsteadiness; if there is no unsteadiness, there is calm; if there is calm, there is no love; if there is no love, there is no coming-and-going (to birth); if there is no coming-and-going, there is no disappearance-and-reappearance; if there is no disappearance-and-reappearance, there is nothing here or there or between them: this is indeed the end of suffering.' This is one of the many quasi-causal chains leading to nibbāna, making it a caused and produced state (the so-called *paṭiccasa-muppāda*-series is the most well known). This text simply says that freedom from attachment and desire will lead to freedom from rebirth; and freedom from rebirth is the same as nibbāna; briefly, without attachment to this life we will not come back.

Seen in isolation, these four quotations can be explained in various ways, as we have seen, but no partial interpretation could be correct. We must look for an explanation that fits them all.

We may first notice that they describe three things, just as most Buddhist texts: (a) life in *samsāra*, (b) nibbāna, and (c) the way leading from the one to the other.

The first of these, the situation of the ordinary man, is described in quotation no. 3: *jāta, bhūta, kata, sankhata*: 'born, become, made, compounded'. More details about the ordinary human world are given in no. 1: earth, water, fire, air, moon,

sun, briefly this material world. To this are added the world of rebirth (*paraloko*) and some of the dimensions realized in meditation. The inconstancy and causal structure of all this is stressed, just as in no. 3. In nos. 2 and 4 something is also said about this world, although more from the psychological side: there is *tanhā*, 'desire', and: *nissitassa ca calitaṃ*, 'for him who has attachment there is unsteadiness'.

So far, there is nothing unique in our text: this is the world of birth and death, as the early Buddhists always described it. When we pass to the other side, nibbāna, we find that the description is more poor than we are used to, since it consists only of negations; there is only one positive assertion: 'truth'. We are left to imagine what this 'truth' can be, which is the absolute opposite to the ordinary human situation, whether it is a different objective dimension (which could follow from no. 1), some sort of ultimate reality (which no. 3 could make us believe), or a new psychological state, the creation of an internal world which transcends the imperfect external world, is independent of it and defies even suffering and rebirth.

It seems, however, to the present writer that the four passages describe different sides of the same experience. No. 3 describes nibbāna as the end of *samsāra*, a life without expectation of further birth and *khandha*-creation. No. 4 describes the way to this state in terms of a causal transformation: attachment→detachment→calm→no love→no rebirth→no suffering. This text also shows that it is a personal transformation towards a personal state. No. 2 supplements this picture by adding some attributes of the experience: selflessness, emptiness, freedom from desire. No. 1 is also a description of nibbāna in terms of consciousness, as explained above. A level of consciousness is created, experienced as empty, impersonal, undifferentiated, peaceful, stable and immovable. Since this inner world was described by means of spatial metaphors, it is not so strange to find a spatial description of nibbāna, or to find it projected as a real space. Altogether U 80 f gives a picture of nibbāna which does not disagree with the general idea, which we have described earlier, but perhaps lays some extra stress on the conscious side (it uses what we have previously called the *viññaṇā*-terminology).

In M I 4 we find a statement which reminds us of U 80, quotation No. 2. *Yo pi so bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṃ khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇa-bhavasaṃyojano samma-d-aññā vimutto, so pi . . . nibbānaṃ nibbānato abhijānāti, nibbānaṃ nibbānato abhiññāya nibbānaṃ na maññati, nibbānasmiṃ na maññati, nibbānato na maññati, nibbānam me ti na maññati, nibbānaṃ nābhinandati; taṃ kissa hetu: pariññātaṃ tassāti vadāmi.* 'Whatever monk is an arahant, free from obsessions, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained his ideal, whose fetters of becoming are destroyed, who is freed by the highest knowledge . . . he knows nibbāna as nibbāna; because he knows nibbāna as nibbāna, he does not think of nibbāna; he does not think of himself in nibbāna; he does not think of himself as nibbāna; he does not think: "nibbāna is mine"; he does not rejoice in nibbāna. What is the reason for this? I say it is because it is thoroughly understood by him.'

In order to understand this we must remember that nibbāna here comes as the last link in a long chain of words, among others: extension, heat, motion, beings, gods, some of the levels of meditation (the fifth to the eighth), the seen, the heard, etc. What is to be brought home is the *anatta* doctrine: the arahant does not identify himself with anything in this world. As he completely understands the world, it offers no problems. He has no objects of thought, he does not distinguish between himself and the objects. There are no more concepts, not even that of nibbāna. Not even nibbāna is permitted to become an object of identification, not even of thought. When you are *in* it, it cannot be seen from the outside and can therefore be no concept. The ego is forgotten, the world forgotten, even the goal forgotten.

This interpretation would agree well with the use of *anatta* in U 80. On the other hand, it does not agree with the more common trend of a certain split: usually the arahant has (a) an experience of nibbāna and (b) at the same time a knowledge that he experiences nibbāna. Usually nibbāna is described as the opposite to this world, not as something to be overcome together with this world.

Nibbāna and death

SOME European scholars translate nibbāna as 'annihilation' and understand it as referring to the fate of the arahant in death. We shall not join the heated and prolonged discussion on this matter as we are concerned only with understanding how the word is used in the Nikāyas.

Nibbāna is the technical term for the extinction of a lamp or any other fire, and the word was used quite concretely for this purpose. The Buddha liked to express himself by means of similes and metaphors. Fire was one of his favourite similes, and we find, for instance, in his 'fire-sermon', S IV 19 f: *sabbaṃ . . . ādittaṃ*, 'everything is on fire', *rāgagginā dosagginā mohagginā ādittaṃ*, 'on fire with the flames of desire, hate and illusion'. The extinction of this, as of any other, fire is called nibbāna. Ta 415: *pappuyya anuttaraṃ visuddhiṃ parinibbāhisi vārinā va joti*, 'by winning the highest purity you must be extinguished like a fire by water'. Ta 1060: *Kassapo jhāyati anupādāno ḍayhamānesu nibbuto*, 'Kassapa meditates without fuel (and: clinging), extinguished among the burning.' Ta, *envois: khemantaṃ pāpuṇitvāna aggikkhandhā va nibbutā*, 'having attained the ultimate security, like a mass of fire extinguished'. A I 236: *Viññāṇassa nirodhena tanhakkhayavimuttino pajjotass' eva nibbānaṃ vimokho hoti cetaso*, 'To him who has won freedom through the cessation of *viññāṇa* (consciousness) and the destruction of craving, the liberation of mind is (like) extinction (nibbāna) of a lamp.'

In all these quotations, nibbāna and the corresponding verb are used as a simile, to point out some correspondence between nibbāna (release) and the extinction of a fire. They seem all to refer to the attainment of nibbāna in this life. We can, however, not end this discussion of the fire analogy without pointing out that there are two conditions, or stages, of nibbāna, as mentioned in I 38: *saupādisesā ca nibbānadhātu anupādisesā ca nibbāna-*

dhātu, 'The condition of nibbāna with the basis still remaining and that without basis.' The person who has attained the former is an arahant, but: *tassa tiṭṭhanteva pañc-indriyāni yesaṃ avighātattā manāpāmanāpaṃ paccanubhoti, sukhadukkhaṃ paṭi-saṃvediyati; tassa yo rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo, ayaṃ vuccati . . . saupādisesā nibbānadhātu.* 'He has still got his five senses, through which, as they are not yet destroyed, he experiences pleasant and unpleasant sensations and feels pleasure and pain. In him the end of desire, hate and illusion is called "the condition of nibbāna with the basis still remaining".' But about the arahant who is to attain the second stage of nibbāna it is said: *tassa idheva . . . sabbavedayitāni anabhin-anditāni sītibhavissanti*, 'to him all things that are sensed here will become cold and no object of pleasure'. And further: *anupādisesā pana samparāyikā yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso*, 'the condition without a basis belongs to the state hereafter, where all becomings completely cease'.

From this it is clear that a distinction should be made between nibbāna in this life, where *upādāna* still remains, and the state of nibbāna reached by the arahant in the moment of death, when the *upādāna* is destroyed. The latter process is also very frequently explained by means of the fire analogy. For instance, in Ta 702-704 we are told about a Nāga who: *sarīraṃ vijahaṃ . . . parinibissaty anāsavo*, 'leaving the body will be extinguished (reach nibbāna) without *āsavā*', just as: *mahāgini pajjalito anāhāro pasammati*, 'a big flaming fire fades away without fuel'. And when the Buddha had died, Anuruddha pronounced the famous stanza (D II 157):

Nāhu assāsa-passāso ṭhita-cittassa tādino.
Anejo santim ārabbha yaṃ kālam akarī munī
Asallīnena cittena vedanaṃ ajjhavāsayi:
Pajjotass' eva nibbānaṃ vimokho cetaso ahūti.

'His mind was firm, without exhalation and inhalation. When the sage passed away, free from desire, having found peace, he endured pain with active mind: the liberation of mind was (like) the extinction of a lamp.'

In M I 486 f, the question is discussed what happens to a

Tathāgata in the moment of death. Buddha denies, as always, both that he is (*hoti*), is not, and neither is, nor is not. Then he is compared to a fire that is extinguished when there is no more fuel: *Sace pana taṃ Vaccha evaṃ puccheyya: yo te ayaṃ purato aggi nibbuto so aggi ito katamaṃ disaṃ gato, puratthimaṃ vā pacchimaṃ vā uttaraṃ vā dakkhiṇaṃ vā ti, evaṃ puṭṭho tvaṃ Vaccha kinti byākareyyāsīti.—Na upeti bho Gotama. Yaṃ hi so bho Gotama aggi tiṇakaṭṭhupādānaṃ paṭicca ajali, tassa ca pariyādānā aññassa ca anupahārā anāhāro nibbuto t' eva sankhaṃ gacchatīti.—Evam-eva kho Vaccha yena rūpena tathāgataṃ paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya taṃ rūpaṃ tathāgatassa pahīnaṃ ucchinnamūlaṃ tālāvatthukataṃ anabhāvakataṃ āyatiṃ anuppādadhammaṃ; rūpasankhāvimutto kho Vaccha tathāgato, gambhīro appameyyo dupparyogāho seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo.* 'But if somebody should ask you, Vaccha: this fire in front of you that is extinguished, in what direction has that fire gone from here, east, west, north or south—what would you answer to such a question?—That does not apply, dear Gotama. For that fire that burned because of fuel (*upādāna*) consisting of straw and wood, has consumed this and not been given anything else and is therefore called "extinguished (*nibbuto*) through lack of fuel".—Just so, the form by which one would like to designate the Tathāgata, that form of the Tathāgata is given up, its root broken, uprooted like a palm, free from further growth or renewed existence in the future. Tathāgata is free from everything called form, he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable, just as a deep ocean.' (The same is said about the other *khandhā*.)

From these quotations we can see that the difference between the two stages of nibbāna is not very essential. In this life the fire can flare up again, as there is fuel left: this is impossible after death, when there is no more fuel. It is not possible to obtain a direct answer to the question what happens to the arahant in death, as the Buddha has always refused to give an answer (see, e.g. D III 135, D II 68). But some indications can be gleaned. We know from the last quotation that he is like a fire that is extinguished. So what was the early Buddhist opinion about the extinct fire? Evidently, it was not thought to be annihilated, as the Buddha here changes over to another

analogy: the deep, immeasurable ocean. The idea must be that there is some sort of similarity between the ocean and an extinct fire, possibly the homogeneity, lack of differentiation and distinguishing traits, the 'calmness' and even distribution. Perhaps the fire was thought to 'go back' to some diluted, 'calm' existence, evenly distributed in matter, when it was extinguished (but without ceasing to be fire). In any case, the quotation proves that the Tathāgata was thought to continue existing in some form after death, as the ocean certainly exists.

A statement in M I 140 also proves that there is no essential difference between a living Tathāgata and a dead Tathāgata. *Evaṃ vimuttacittaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhuṃ sa-Indā devā sa-Brahmakā sa-Pajāpatikā anvesaṃ nādhigacchanti: idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan-ti, taṃ kissa hetu: Diṭṭhe vāhaṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgataṃ ananuvejjo ti vadāmi.* 'When a monk's mind is freed thus, the gods—those with Inda, those with Brahmā, those with Pajāpati—do not succeed in their search if they think: "This is the *viññāṇa* (consciousness) of a Tathāgata." What is the reason for this? I say that a Tathāgata cannot be known even in this life.' In this life the arahant of course exists in the conventional meaning and although he still has his body and even his *citta*—a *citta* in purified and 'liberated' form—he cannot be known or recognized. As a physical recognition could not be any problem, I take it to mean that his *citta* or *viññāṇa* cannot be studied or even identified by means of mind-reading (except by other arahants). I will show later that the *citta* of the arahant in some form survives death, and in that case the change in death will be small, as pointed out in our quotation.

In S III 112 it is explicitly denied that the arahant is annihilated in death. Sāriputta says in a discussion with Yamaka: *Ettha ca te āvuso Yamaka diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgato anupalabbhiyamāno, kallaṃ nu te taṃ veyyākaraṇam Tathāhaṃ Bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitam ājānāmi, yathā khīṇāsavo bhikkhu kāyassa bhedā ucchijjati vinassati na hoti param maraṇā ti?* 'Then, since even in this life a Tathāgata is really and truly untraceable, is it proper for you to assert: "As I understand the doctrine taught by the Master, a monk who is free from the obsessions is broken up and perishes when the

body is broken up and does not exist after death"?' This is denied with the approval of Sāriputta.

What Sāriputta wanted to stress here is that the *anatta* doctrine applies also to the arahant and that he cannot be identified with any of the personality factors (*khandhā*). It is therefore not possible to define what an arahant really is even in this life, and so no conclusion can be drawn as to the state after death. The *khandhā* are *anicca* and *dukkha* and therefore dissolved: this is pointed out in the continued discussion. Two things should be noted: first that it is denied that the arahant is annihilated in death, secondly that *citta* was not mentioned in this discussion.

The fact that the arahant cannot be known either in this life or afterwards, is not a universal truth, since arahants always can recognize each other. We find, for instance, in S I 194 that Maha Moggallāna in a company of five hundred arahants could check that they really were arahants: *Tesaṃ sudaṃ āyasmā Maha-Moggallāno cetasā cittaṃ samannesati vippamuttaṃ nirupadhiṃ.* 'The venerable Maha-Moggallāna saw with his mind (*ceto*) that their mind (*citta*) was freed without basis (for rebirth remaining).' This can only mean that the arahant has still his *citta* and that this has kept enough of its individuality in order to be identified. This fact will not surprise us once we have understood that *citta* is the agency within the person which really attains nibbāna, as expressed in S III 45: *Rūpadhātuyā* (*vedanā-, saññā-, sankhāra-, viññāṇa-dhātuyā*) *ce bhikkhave bhikkhuno cittam virattaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti anupādāya āsavehi vimuttatā ṭhitam, ṭhitattā santussitaṃ, santussitattā na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paccattaññeva parinibbāyati.* 'If a monk's *citta* is not attached to the element of form (feeling, perception, activities, consciousness), and is released from the obsessions without basis, then by its release it is steadfast; by its steadfastness it is content; being content it does not become excited; free from excitement it attains nibbāna by itself.'

It is fairly well documented that *citta* was thought to survive death. We find, for instance, in S V 370: *Yañca khvassa cittaṃ dīgharattaṃ saddhāparibhāvitam sīla-suta-cāga-paribhāvitaṃ, tam uddhagāmi hoti visesagāmi,* '(Even if the body is devoured by crows and vultures) yet his *citta*, if longtime

practised in faith, virtue, learning and renunciation, soars aloft and wins the excellent.' This is said by the Buddha in reply to Mahānāma who has asked what would happen if he were to die. In Ta 1109 ff, the former theatrical manager, Tālapuṭa, tells the complete story of his *citta*: it has followed him during many existences, it has preached the doctrine to him, but now, when he has followed its advice, it is still not satisfied but makes difficulties; but he promises to give his *citta* adequate training, and: *migo yathā seri sucittakānane rammaṃ giriṃ pāvisi abbhamālinaṃ, anākule tattha nage ramissasi, asaṃsayaṃ citta parābhavissasi*, 'just as the free gazelle in the many-coloured forest reaches a cloud-wreathed splendid mountain-top, so shall even you, *citta*, find your happiness on the uninhabited mountain and doubtless reach the beyond'.

The many problems in connection with these quotations will be discussed in due course, in so far as they are related to the interpretation of nibbāna. Here, we just want to stress that we are not without information about exactly what is thought to survive death in the arahant, although in a form that not everybody can recognize, not even Māra and the gods. We know, however, that at least the Buddha himself claimed ability to identify and report about dead arahants: We have, for instance, the story about Vakkali (S III 119 ff), who was ill and killed himself. The Buddha said about him later: *Apatiṭṭhitena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena Vakkali kulaputto parinibbuto ti*, 'with consciousness not established the noble-born Vakkali has attained parinibbāna'. A similar story is to be found in D II 91 f, where Ānanda tells the Buddha that a number of people, some monks and some lay people, had died in Nadika, where the Buddha and his disciples had just arrived, and asks what has happened to them. He got detailed information, indeed, and among them one monk was mentioned as arahant. We can take these stories to mean that at least the Buddha himself was able to trace an arahant even after death. After the quotations given earlier, this would not seem to involve any fundamental difficulties, as there seems to be small difference between his state before and after death. One more text is worth quoting to this effect. In SN 1075, the Buddha is asked: *Atthan gato so uda vā so n'atthi udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo?* 'The

man who has gone to rest, is he no more or is he forever free from illness?' And he replies: *Atthan gatassa na pamāṇam atthi, yena naṃ vajju, taṃ tassa n'atthi, sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu samūhatā vādapathā pi sabbe ti.* 'There is no measure of him who has gone to rest, by which to define him: that is not for him; when all *dhammā* are removed, then all means of recognition are removed.' This informs us again that the arahant, when dead, cannot be found or recognized, but an explanation is given which is extremely interesting: *dhammā* are removed. The PTA translation gives the rendering 'conditions', but a more normal translation would be 'ideations' or 'mental contents', 'mental processes'. This would give an easily understandable psychological meaning. For one of the effects of meditation is to make the mind (*citta* or *viññāṇa*) stable and empty of mental contents (*dhammā*). As we know that *citta* was thought to survive, it can easily be understood that an empty *citta* is more difficult to read and recognize than the more complicated and desire-ridden 'normal' *citta*: it is more impersonal. In order to 'read' a person's mind, there must be a mind to read, and this mind must be as differentiated and rich in content as possible. *Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu* may well imply the same psychological process as *viññāṇassa nirodhena* in A I 236, quoted above.

This chapter has been mainly descriptive, aiming at a presentation of the facts given in the Nikāyas. We have found, in short, that the word nibbāna is used because of the fire analogy (to some extent, the word *upādāna* and related words seem to be used for the same reason). Still, it does not imply annihilation but rather a different type of existence: perhaps a diluted, undifferentiated, 'resting' existence, more or less impersonal but still recognizable.

The personality factors and nibbāna

THE original Buddhism was a psychologically sophisticated doctrine with a very rich and differentiated psychological terminology. Psychological knowledge formed a very essential part of the training for and experience of nibbāna. Minute psychological analyses were one of the aims of meditation, and an adequate understanding of the own self was considered a necessary basis for the ultimate achievement.

The psychology of Nikāya Buddhism has not yet been adequately analysed and described. An early attempt by Mrs Rhys Davids (9) is superficial and biased. The work of Jayatilleke, referred to previously (4), is reliable but touches psychological matters only occasionally. An interesting treatment of some special questions of psychological interest is found in an article by him (5). A semantic investigation of three psychological concepts has been performed by myself and is already frequently referred to (6). Much patient research is therefore still needed before we can really understand the meaning of the psychological terminology of early Buddhism. The interpretation given in the following comparison between Buddhist and present-day Western psychology is to a large extent only tentative.

Western psychology usually starts its analysis of human personality from the organism: the sense organs and the nervous system are the basic *structures* and their *functions* constitute the main objects of psychological analysis. Personality is considered a self-regulating system with only functional unity. The new-born baby is, however, not an empty structure. Rather, he has some basic *programmes* for behaviour, e.g. some emotional patterns and the basic needs, physiological, sexual and others. Some of the nervous processes become *conscious*, and consciousness is therefore considered secondary to the

physiological processes. Through the senses, there is a continuous inflow of information, and much of this information is kept available, through the storing capacity of the central nervous system. Through this capacity, the doors are open to a modification of the organism—for good or for bad. The human personality is conceived as governed by causal laws, and continually changing: in normal cases there is unity, to be sure, but this unity is rarely very perfect and conflicts are common. Within the physiological structure, there is a stream of processes only and certainly no unchanging soul. There is a hierarchy of purposes, and some may be fairly constant and function as organizing forces. These forces, with which the individual identifies himself, are often called the *ego* or the *self*: they form the core of the person's image of himself. His values and norms are sometimes called the *superego*. This is the conscience, which tells him what he should be and is frequently a severe critic of the ego.

There are striking similarities between this interpretation of the human being and the early Buddhist view, but there are differences also. By the *anatta*- and *anicca*-doctrines the soullessness and process-nature are stressed. By the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series the quality of everything personal as being caused is pointed out, although this causality is partly of moral type. In a way, Buddhism also considers conscious phenomena as secondary to the bodily processes, as *citta* is called *sarīraja*, 'born of body' (Ta 355), but *asarīra*, 'incorporeal' (Dh 37), and *viññāṇa* is said to depend on the body, as we read in D I 76 f: *Ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūtiko mātā-pettika-sambhavo odanakummās-upacayo anicc'-ucchādana-parimaddana-bhedana-viddhaṃsanadhammo, idañ ca pana me viññāṇaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhan ti*. 'This body of mine has form, it is built up of the four elements, it springs from father and mother, it is continually renewed by so much boiled rice and juicy foods, its nature is impermanence, decay, abrasion, dissolution and disintegration; and therein is this consciousness of mine, too, resting, on that does it depend.' In spite of this dependence the bodily processes are not further analysed, and the conscious phenomena are always treated as the most important. This may be one of the reasons why the 'series of dependences'

(*paṭiccasamuppāda*) often seems to mention things in the wrong order. We are, for instance, used to consider needs as more basic than consciousness, and to interpret consciousness as depending on perception and perception as depending on the sense-organs. Buddhist thinking seems to have started from what is immediately given and most important to the person, namely activity and consciousness. The relations of the rest is to a great extent implication and activation.

Buddhism emphasizes the impermanence and process-nature of the human personality more than Western psychology. The words of Visuddhimagga are famous: 'Nibbāna is, but not the man that enters it.' The opinion of original Buddhism is perhaps best presented by Sister Vajirā (S I 135), who was asked by Māra, how a 'being' (*satta*) comes to be. She replies:

Kinnu satto ti paccesi,
Māra diṭṭhigataṃ nu te.
suddhasankhārapuñjo yaṃ
nayidha sattūpalabbhati.
yathā hi angasambhārā
hoti saddo ratho iti.
evaṃ khandhesu santesu
hoti satto ti sammuti.

'Why do you take the "being" for granted, Māra? Your opinion is false. Here is nothing but a multitude of activities, and no "being" can be found. For just as a combination of parts is called "car", just so do we use the word "being", when all *khandhā* (factors) are there.'

Here the functional unity of personality is admitted. This functional unity is in reality what contemporary psychologists call 'personality'. The car has clearly some sort of primitive personality, an individual constellation of parts; it is capable of functioning only when all the parts are there. None of the parts can be called 'car', not even all the parts together, if they are not combined in a very special way. The 'car-ness' is something above but not independent of the parts. A personality is also not the body, not the perceptual function, not the feeling, etc., but the proper combination of them. This is what the

definition of Vajirā seems to imply, and modern psychology can only applaud.

Some formulations seem more radical. We can, e.g. refer to S III 111, where it is said just before the part quoted above, and after it has been denied that a Tathāgata can be identified with any of the factors (*khandhā*) individually: *Rūpā vedanā saññā sankhārā viññāṇaṃ tathāgato ti samanupassasīti?—No hetaṃ āvuso.* 'Do you regard a Tathāgata as body, feeling, perception, activities, and consciousness?—Surely not.' Here it seems to be denied that all the factors together constitute a personality. But it is left unclear whether the combination is meant as mechanical and unorganic or whether also an organic-functional combination of the factors would fail to constitute a personality. As the discussion here is about a Tathāgata we also have the question whether the same would be said about an ordinary man. After all, something happens to the *khandhā* when a man attains nibbāna, as we shall find soon. We have also the final question, whether the *khandhā* are to be considered an exhaustive enumeration of *all* personality factors. Is there nothing in personality not included in the *khandhā*? There certainly is. *Attā* is denied, with good reason, but *citta* is not denied.

Buddhism never had any reason to work out a complete and scientific theory of personality. The purpose was intensely practical. This may be the reason why the psychological terminology seems to be arranged in clusters, each cluster belonging to the analysis of one doctrinal point and seemingly with little connection with other clusters. The problem was, for instance, to find out the nature of the 'soul': the result was the *khandhā*-analysis. Or the problem was to explore our state of *dukkha* and its connection with rebirth: out came a causal analysis, in which our whole mental make-up is involved, in order to explain how we ourselves create our suffering and rebirth. Or the problem was to find a moral continuity and a basis for development, and we got the concept of *citta*, the *enfant terrible* of the monk, from the beginning endowed with all moral depravities and bound to the world by means of desires and passions, but capable of the highest development.

These conceptual spheres were occasionally confronted with each other but never properly integrated into a comprehensive

theory: they remain three independent deep-diggings in the same mine. Without a special investigation we therefore cannot know, whether the words have identical meaning when used in different spheres; some problems of this type are still not solved.

1. *Khandhā.* As we have seen from S I 135, the individual is said to be constituted by *khandhā*, translated by 'groups', 'aggregates', 'factors'. We also find the word *upādānakkhandhā*, 'base-factors', often translated 'grasping-groups', although it should not be forgotten that it also means 'heap of fuel' (subject to the fire of *rāga*, 'desire', without which the individual is *nibbuta*, 'extinguished', i.e. 'free'). *Khandha* in itself can also mean 'tree-trunk' and thus is fit to join the fire terminology.

Birth and death are defined in terms of *khandhā*. Birth is *khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo āyatanānaṃ paṭilābho* (S II 3), 'appearance of the factors, acquiring of sense-spheres', and *maraṇaṃ ... khandhānaṃ bhedo* (M III 249), 'death is the breaking up of the factors'. It is possible to wish for a certain constellation of factors in a future life: *Evaṃrūpo siyam anāgatam addhānam; evaṃvedano siyam anāgatam addhānam*, etc. (S III 101). 'May I have such a body in future time, may I have such feeling in future time,' etc. And just as we can make a painted picture of a person: *evam eva kho bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano rūpaññeva abhinibbattento* (S III 152), 'even so the ignorant layman creates and recreates his body' (etc., the other factors follow). This is done through the agencies of *citta* and *viññāṇa* and is made possible through the law of causality, for

Nayidam attakataṃ bimbaṃ
na yidaṃ parakatam aghaṃ
hetuṃ paṭicca sambhūtaṃ
hetubhangā nirujjhati.
Yathā aññataraṃ bījaṃ
khette vuttaṃ virūhati
paṭhavīrasañ cāgamma
sinehañ ca tad ubhayaṃ
evam khandhā ca dhātuyo
cha ca āyatanā ime
hetuṃ paṭicca sambhūtā
hetubhangā nirujjhare ti (S I 134)

'This evil shape is not created by itself and also not by somebody else; it has come to be by means of a cause and ceases by disruption of the cause. Just as a certain seed, sown in the field, which grows thanks to the taste of earth and moisture, these both, just so the factors, the elements, and the six sense-fields come to be by means of a cause and cease by disruption of the cause.'

This text is interesting because it describes the human personality as rather unreal (an 'image') and unpleasant. Its birth is an impersonal process effected by causes, through which a certain constellation of elements is created.

The factors may be briefly defined as follows:

(a) *Rūpa* means form, external and internal. In this context we are certain that the meaning is body, as *rūpa* is sometimes replaced by *kāya*, 'body'.

(b) *Vedanā* is usually defined in terms of feeling, e.g. S IV 232: *sukhā vedanā dukkhā vedanā adukkhamasukhā vedanā*, 'pleasant, unpleasant, neutral feeling'. These feelings are, however, not described as subjective evaluations secondarily added to the sensory process, but rather as an integrative part of the sensory process itself. They are said to be an immediate result of contact or stimulation: *Phassa-samudayā vedanā-samudayo* (M I 51), 'from the genesis of stimulation is the genesis of feeling', i.e. 'feeling is produced through stimulation'. And we find classifications of feelings according to sense-fields: feelings produced by the stimulation of the eye, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind (M I 51). We must therefore think of *vedanā* as something closely related to sensation. Possibly *vedanā* is conceived as given in the stimulation itself as it is said to cease when stimulation ceases: *phassanirodhā vedanānirodho*.

(c) *Saññā* is usually translated by 'perception' and is said to depend on *phassa*, just as *vedanā*: *Phasso . . . saññānaṃ nidānasambhavo* (A III 413), 'the perceptions are causally produced by stimulation'. The same text says: *Cha yimā . . . saññā: rūpasaññā, saddasaññā, gandhasaññā, rasasaññā, phoṭṭhabbasaññā, dhammasaññā*, 'perceptions are these six: perception of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and ideas'. From this we can see that our word 'perception' is not entirely satisfactory because

this word can only refer to external things. Buddhist psychology includes also an internal sense, *mano*, which by means of stimulation, *phassa*, can 'perceive' ideas, *dhammā*. Memory images, imaginations and thoughts are, therefore, included in the activity of *saññā*, and a more adequate translation would be 'ideation', in German *Vorstellung*. Cf. SN 874, *saññānidānā hi papañcasankhā*, 'what is called illusion has its origin in *saññā*'; *devā arūpino saññāmayā* (M I 410), 'formless gods made of *saññā*'. In A V 105, ten *saññā* are mentioned that should be developed, among them *asubhasaññā, maraṇasaññā, anicca-saññā, virāgasaññā*, 'idea of the unpleasant, of death, of impermanence, of freedom from desire'. In these examples, the translation 'perception' is impossible.

(d) *Viññāṇa* is the most important of the *khandhā*, as it is more actively engaged in the process of rebirth. It is the accumulative, dynamic stream of consciousness, always changing, always observable, as often as we care to introspect, containing a jumble of perceptual data, memory images, feelings and desires. It builds on *vedanā* and *saññā*; *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vijānāti* (M I 293), 'whatever one feels, that one perceives; whatever one perceives, that one is conscious of'. Memory is rarely mentioned as a separate function in Buddhism; it is taken for granted that our existence is accumulative: nothing is really forgotten, and our present state is continually changed through the effects of the past. *Viññāṇa* is the carrier of these accumulations, and it is conceived as a stream flowing ceaselessly in time if not made to stop. It must use the other *khandhā* as a base (S III 9) but is to a certain extent independent of the body. Māra is on the outlook for the *viññāṇa* of dead persons (S I 122).

(e) *Sankhāra* is motivated, purposeful activity, morality-causal behaviour. The meaning may sometimes be diluted to 'process'. Several interesting analyses are to be found in the Nikāyas. The purposiveness becomes clear from S III 60: *Katamā ca . . . sankhārā? Chayime . . . cetanākāyā: rūpasañcetanā saddasañcetanā gandhasañcetanā rasasañcetanā phoṭṭhabbasañcetanā dhammasañcetanā*, 'And what are the activities? They are these six forms of purposeful striving: striving for form, for sound, for smell, for taste, for touch, for mental images.' In

M I 301, three types of activities are distinguished: *kāyasankhāro vacīsankhāro cittasankhāro*, 'activity of body, speech, and mind'. A further definition follows: *Assāsapassāsā . . . kāyasankhāro, vitakkavicārā vacīsankhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca cittasankhāro*, 'inbreathing and outbreathing is activity of body, thinking and examination is activity of speech, ideation and feeling is activity of mind'. Here the activity-meaning is quite clear, but the purposiveness is not stressed, in fact breathing is completely involuntary.

Sankhāra is sometimes translated by '*kamma*-formation', because all activity has a moral aspect, is morally judged, has moral causes and moral consequences. There is here a close co-operation between *viññāṇa* and *sankhāra*: *sankhāra* is the effector of the deeds (*kamma*), *viññāṇa* is the accumulator of the effects. The connection between *kamma* and *sankhāra* can be seen in M I 389: *Katamañ-ca . . . kammaṃ kanhaṃ kanhavipākaṃ? Idha . . . ekacco sabyābajjhaṃ kāyasankhāraṃ abhisankharoti, sabyābajjhaṃ vacīsankhāraṃ abhisankharoti, sabyābajjhaṃ manosankhāraṃ abhisankharoti*, 'And what is the deed that is black, with black consequences? Here someone performs a harmful activity of the body, or a harmful activity of speech or a harmful activity of mind.' That *viññāṇa* is affected can be seen in S II 82: *Avijjāgato yaṃ . . . purisapuggalo puññaṃ ce sankhāraṃ abhisankharoti, puññūpagaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ*. 'If a person, although ignorant, performs a meritorious act, *viññāṇa* acquires merit.' It is significant that *sankhāra* is the producer of *kamma*, as the factor of responsibility is entered into the causal process: the intention behind the act is more important than the act itself. On the whole, intention, will and desire has an immense influence upon the process of rebirth, as can be seen, for instance, in D III 258: *Tassa evaṃ hoti—'Aho vatāhaṃ kāyassa bhedā param maraṇā khattiyamahāsālānaṃ vā brāhmaṇamahāsālānaṃ vā gahapati-mahāsālānaṃ vā sahavyataṃ uppajjeyyan ti'. So taṃ cittaṃ dahati, taṃ cittaṃ adhiṭṭhāti, taṃ cittaṃ bhāveti. Tassa taṃ cittaṃ hīne vimuttaṃ uttariṃ abhāvitaṃ tatr' uppattiyā saṃvattati*. 'And he thinks: "Ah! if only I may be reborn at the dissolution of the body after death as one amongst wealthy nobles, or brahmins, or householders!" This thought he holds fixed, firmly established, and develops it. This thought,

set free in a low sphere and not developed to anything higher, leads to rebirth in this sphere.' The causal processes of life are, as we find, complicated. Physical causality is taken for granted, but in addition we find long-range moral causality, and finally the last wish of the person: a psychological causality.

The fate of the *khandhā* in nibbāna can to a great extent be deduced from what we already know. In the living individual, the factors must be intact and functioning. The body is not changed, and the perceptual apparatus must function, but it will not be permitted to stimulate desire and passion. Activity must to a certain extent go on, but it must be of a kind that produces no more *kamma*-effects. *Viññāṇa* must be reduced to such a state that it will not 'flow over' into a new existence.

Let us now explain this further and collect evidence from the texts.

The arahant Sāmidatta says, Ta 90, *Pañcakkhandhā pariññātā tiṭṭhanti chinnamūlakā*, 'The five factors are well understood; they are still standing, although their root is cut off.' To understand the factors correctly means to see them as unreal and unsubstantial and not identify oneself with them. So it is said in S III 142:

Pheṇapiṇḍūpamaṃ rūpaṃ,
vedanā bubbuḷupamā.
Marīcikūpamā saññā,
sankhārā kadalūpamā.
Māyūpamañca viññāṇaṃ.

'The body is like a ball of foam, feeling is like a bubble, ideation is like a mirage, the activities are like a plantain-trunk, consciousness is like an illusion.'

And further, in S III 168, *Arahatā . . . ime pañcupādānakkhandhe aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato yoniso manasi kattabbā.* 'An arahant should seriously consider these five base-factors as impermanent, suffering, illness, a boil, an arrow, an evil, a disease, an enemy, as decay, as empty and without a self.' The exhortative way of expression suggests that the factors continued to give problems even to an arahant, although the text goes on to say that *natthi . . . arahato uttarikaraṇīyaṃ*, 'to an

arahant there is nothing more to be done'. A similar suggestion can be found in S II 54, where Sāriputta says: *tathāsato viharāmi, yathāsatam viharantaṃ āsavā nānusavanti*, 'I stay so mindful that the obsessions no longer obsess me (staying so mindful).' From this follows that exercises in mindfulness (more about these will be said in the following chapter) were used to keep the obsessions out. Cf. also S II 239: *Yo bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṃ khīṇāsavo tassa pāhaṃ lābhasakkārasilokam antarāyāya vadāmīti*, 'Monks, even for the monk who is an arahant with his obsessions destroyed, I say that gains, favours, and flattery are a danger.' It is true that the arahant had achieved his aim, but this achievement had to be kept up by constant training. The state called nibbāna could be lost.

These more general statements can be somewhat clarified with the help of other texts, separately dealing with the factors. We find, for instance, something about *sankhāra* and *vedanā* in S II 82: *Yato . . . bhikkhuno avijjā pahīnā hoti vijjā uppannā, so . . . n'eva puññābhisankhāram abhisankharoti, na apuññābhisankhāram abhisankharoti, na āneñjābhisankhāram abhisankharoti*. 'When in a monk ignorance is conquered and wisdom is attained, then . . . he does not perform neither an act of merit, nor an act of demerit, nor a neutral act.' This seems to mean that he does not perform any acts of kammic consequence or kammic relevance. The acts he can still perform must be entirely free from this aspect. The ideal is, as Dh 368 expresses it, *padaṃ santaṃ sankhārūpasamaṃ sukhaṃ*, 'the tranquil, pleasant state, where activity is at rest'. A way of reaching it is indicated in M III 82: *Passambhayaṃ kāyasankhāraṃ assasissāmīti sikkhati*, 'He trains himself thinking: "I will breathe out calming down the activity of body."' This forms part of the *sati*-exercises of the seventh part of the eightfold way. We shall have more to say about this method, but, briefly, the principle of it seems to have been to follow each movement, each activity with unflinching attention and so keep the activity free from desire, free from kammic effects, as it is said in M I 270, after *upaṭṭhitakāyasati*, 'with attention fixed on the body', is mentioned: *assa te pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti*, 'these evil unskilled processes in him are stopped without remainder'.

If the activity is in this way 'calm' and 'pure', there will be

nothing for *viññāṇa* to store up. But *viññāṇa* has also problems of its own, mainly through influence from *saññā* and *vedanā*, and there are special methods to cope with them, mainly those belonging to the *samādhi*-group. What should be achieved is stated in M III 223, *bahiddhā . . . viññāṇe avikkhitte avisaṭe sati ajjhattaṃ asaṇṭhite, anupādāya aparitassato āyatiṃ jātijarā-maraṇa-dukkha-samudaya-sambhavo na hoti*, 'if consciousness is externally undistracted and concentrated, and internally unsettled, then, for him who is thus free from grasping and therefore undisturbed, there will in the future be no generation of birth, old age, death or pain'. The word *asaṇṭhite*, 'unsettled', probably refers to a *viññāṇa* that has not got any *ṭhitiyā*, 'placement', for a new rebirth. 'Unsettled' therefore should mean 'free from conditions of rebirth'; that is with the more conventional expression which follows, 'free from grasping'. We find similar expressions in M II 265: *Tassa taṃ upekhaṃ anabhinandato anabhivadato anajjhosāya tiṭṭhato na tan nissitaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ na tad upādānaṃ. Anupādāno, Ānanda, bhikkhu parinibbāyati.* 'As he does not rejoice in that equanimity, nor approve of it or cleave to it, consciousness is not supported by it, does not have it as foundation. A monk without foundation attains nibbāna.' This tells us something about rebirth and about the relation between *viññāṇa* and *upādāna*. The equanimity (in the context a result of the 8th *jhāna*, *upādānaseṭṭhaṃ*, 'the best foundation'!) is itself a state of consciousness, just as the *jhānas*. *Upādāna* therefore is itself a manifestation of *viññāṇa*: there is a feeling of dependence and need which is a foundation or cause of new life. A term frequently used about psychological factors in nibbāna is *nirodha*, 'ceasing', also used more or less as a synonym of nibbāna. We find it, e.g. in SN 734, *viññāṇassa nirodhena n'atthi dukkhassa sambhavo*, 'by the ceasing of consciousness there is no generation of suffering'. Although complete cessation of *viññāṇa* will take place only in death, the word cessation is still adequate for nibbāna in this life, since *viññāṇa* is a series of processes, and the meaning is not different from what is said in the continuation of the text: *viññāṇūpasamā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbuto ti*, 'by calming *viññāṇa* the monk becomes satisfied and attains nibbāna'. *Nirodha* probably means no more than 'stopping' = 'making still and immovable'.

An interesting description of the *viññāṇa* of the arahant is found in D I 223, where it is asked, where name and form cease without remainder. Answer:

Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pahaṃ:
Ettha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo vāyo na gādhati,
Ettha dīghañ ca rassañ ca anuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,
Ettha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesaṃ uparujjhati,
Viññāṇassa nirodhena etth' etaṃ uparujjhati.

'The consciousness that is without attribute, endless, drawing back from everything: there water, earth, fire and wind find no footing; there long and short, fine and coarse, pleasant and unpleasant—there name and form stop without remainder: by the stopping of consciousness this also stops.' In nibbāna *viññāṇa* is said to be stopped, i.e. the flow of conscious processes has ceased and consciousness has been emptied, either by means of meditation or simply by means of *paññā*, 'understanding'. It is therefore undifferentiated (i.e. free from attributes), endless (because a resting consciousness contains no sense of limits), and being undifferentiated, it cannot contain separate things like water and earth. And so no further processes are produced and no rebirth can take place: for in rebirth, *viññāṇa* is said to enter the mother's womb and give rise to name and form there (D II 63). But, in nibbāna, *viññāṇa* is stopped: its processes do not flow any more, there are no more desires manifest and it can therefore not be stationed in this way: *Yato ca kho . . . no ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā, ārammaṇe asati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti* (S II 66), 'But when somebody neither plans, nor decides, nor has a subconscious leaning, then this basis for the settlement of *viññāṇa* does not exist; and without the basis *viññāṇa* will not become established.'

It remains to be said about *viññāṇa*, that it is probably one aspect of *citta* or a name for some of the processes of *citta*. Both are said to be involved in rebirth, but we should of course not understand this as a dual rebirth: the instrumental processes are the *viññāṇa*-processes of *citta*. The basis of rebirth (*ārammaṇa, upādāna*) is the intense wish (*upādāna*) to go on living.

When *viññāṇa* has stopped, there are practically no *viññāṇa*-processes left in *citta*, and there is no base for rebirth. Evidently the arahant has conscious processes as long as he lives. This may be explained in two ways, and it cannot be decided which is the more correct. There may be two layers of *citta:* one surface layer which consists of the everyday processes, perceptions and reflections, and one deeper layer that is undifferentiated. Or perhaps D I 223 really describes the highest level of meditation which was considered the most normal stepping-stone to nibbāna and therefore in this text simply was described as a characteristic of nibbāna itself.

S II 82, partly quoted above, has also something to say about *vedanā*: *So sukham ce vedanaṃ vedayati, sā aniccāti pajānāti, anajjhositā ti pajānāti, anabhinanditāti pajānāti.* 'If he feels a pleasant feeling, he knows it is impermanent, he knows it is not clung to, he knows he does not enjoy it' (this is repeated for other types of feelings). This text comes immediately after an arahant formula, so we know it refers to an arahant, and it shows that feelings are normal in nibbāna; what is new is that they no longer give rise to desire and attachment. The same idea is expressed in D II 157, which has already been quoted. It is said about the Buddha that he endured pain (*vedanā*) with active mind; so we know that feelings were not unknown to him.

What happens to the factors when an arahant dies can be seen in U 93, where it is said about Dabba Mallaputta who had just died: *abhedi kāyo, nirodhi saññā, vedanā pi'tidahaṃsu sabbā, vūpasamiṃsu sankhārā, viññāṇam attham agamā.* 'The body is broken, ideation is stopped, all feelings are cooled, the activities are calmed down, consciousness has gone to rest (or: gone home).' The choice of verbs is interesting, since most of them suggest stopping or reaching immobility rather than annihilation. This is in good agreement with the Buddhist view of the process-nature of personality, and it also suggests that the psychological factors may 'go home' and continue to exist, just as the body will exist in a different form after death.

2. The *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series is a series of (at least mainly) psychological factors, in order of dependence. Its main purpose seems to have been to explain the human state of suffering (with rebirth as its main component) and to find a way to eliminate it.

I have tried to show earlier (6) that no strict causality and no strict time sequence was intended, and that the later interpretation that three successive lives are covered cannot be correct. The main reasons are, first, that many other arrangements of factors are to be found in the Nikāyas and, secondly, that the whole purpose would be defeated by this interpretation. A closer scrutiny of the factors will reveal that the relations between them is usually a vague dependence or correlation, sometimes implication, sometimes activation. They may all be more or less simultaneous, as they should be, because our present *dukkha* depends on our present *avijjā*, etc.; otherwise, how could we get rid of *dukkha* and achieve the only goal promised by Buddhism? The *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series therefore amounts to another analysis of personality in order to find the factors of importance for the attainment of nibbāna.

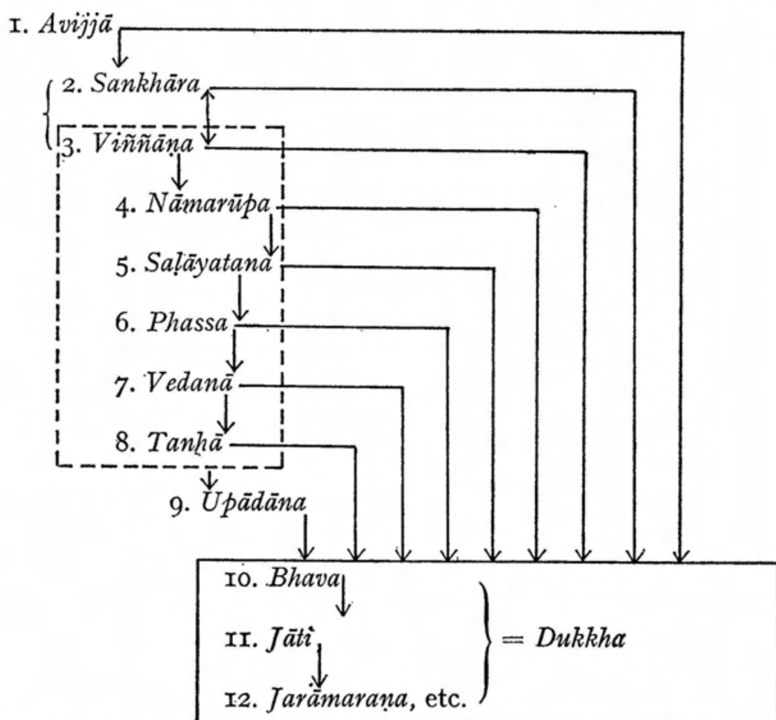
If this interpretation is correct, it is perhaps most realistic to represent the series as shown in the figure on page 78. This arrangement would mean that each factor in itself leads to suffering but that, *when analysed*, it will be found to involve the succeeding factors. There are indications that this interpretation may be true. We find, for instance, that *avijjā* is an *āsava*, just as *bhava*. As such, it is said to cause suffering in its own right, without the intervening links. *Viññāṇa* is said to lead to rebirth without other links being mentioned. And in D II 308 it is said that *tanhā* directly leads to suffering. It happens, on the other hand, that a dependence in the reversed direction is mentioned: *viññāṇa* is, e.g. said to depend on *nāmarūpa* and *sankhāra* on *phassa* (S III 101).

Next, a short definition of the links will be given.

Avijjā: Katamā ca . . . avijjā? Yaṃ kho . . . dukkhe aññāṇaṃ dukkhasamudaye aññāṇaṃ dukkhanirodhe aññāṇaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇaṃ (S II 4). 'What is ignorance? Not understanding suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This is an intellectual factor, involving lack of insight into the human situation and the Buddhist method of salvation.

Sankhāra and *viññāṇa* have already been discussed.

Nāmarūpa is an old philosophical concept and is usually translated 'mind and matter', 'soul and body'. This agrees fairly



Paṭiccasamuppāda, 'the chain of dependencies', 'the chain of correlations'. Because of *ignorance*, the *volitional activity* influences, enriches and (by accumulation) charges *consciousness*, which, when analysed, turns out to consist of, or work through, *internal and external* material, organized according to the *six sense modalities*, activated by *stimulation* which gives rise to *sensations with their feeling-tones*, by means of which *desires* are activated. Desire leads to attachment which is the *foundation* of *becoming* and *rebirth*, etc.: *suffering*.

well with the analysis found in S II 3: *Katamañca . . . nāmarūpam? Vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro, idaṃ vuccati nāmaṃ. Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ. Idaṃ vuccati rūpaṃ.* 'What is name and form? Feeling, ideation, purposive striving, stimulation, attention: this is called name. The four elements and the form derived

from them: this is called form.' The first group clearly consists of psychological functions. The *rūpa*-group is perhaps bodily processes (SN 1074 speaks about *nāmakāya* instead of *nāmarūpa* which supports this interpretation). In this way, we would arrive at the translation 'psychophysical processes'. We can understand that consciousness can give rise to both conscious and bodily processes and also that consciousness depends on both types of processes. This is perhaps exactly what D II 62 f is intended to express, when it is first said: *Viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*, 'name-and-form depends on consciousness', and soon after: *Nāmarūpa-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*, 'consciousness depends on name-and-form'.

Another way of translation would be 'internal and external', referring to the fact that all *viññāṇa*-processes are conscious but some have originated from external stimulation, others from consciousness itself. In this case, *nāmarūpa* would become a purely psychological concept, although the contact with the external world is still stressed.

Viññāṇa implies the six sense-modalities, *saḷāyatana*, which should probably not be translated 'the six sense-organs'. These, in turn, imply the fact of six-fold stimulation, *phassa*. Stimulation gives rise to feelings, and these are a basis for the desires, *tanhā*. All these factors in the centre of the series are certainly not causal; they are rather a further analysis of the *viññāṇa*-processes, and the arrangement is one of implication and correlation rather than causality. The *viññāṇa*-processes are analysed into six types; these six types imply corresponding six types of stimulation; on stimulation we react by feelings and these activate desire. Even *nāmarūpa*, if explained as 'internal and external', can enter into this, because the five first types of *viññāṇa* are stimulated from the external world, while the sixth type is *mano-viññāṇa*, i.e. processes produced by the internal sense. *Nāmarūpa* can therefore be explained as a preliminary analysis of the conscious processes into two types, which is then carried on to a six-fold analysis.

The next link is *upādāna*. This term is not perfectly understood and has perhaps got its place in the series because of its double meaning. Its function is to build a bridge between 'desire' and *bhava*, 'becoming', the latter probably meaning

'preliminary selection of one of the three rebirth-worlds': the world of *kāma*, 'sense-pleasure', *rūpa*, 'form', and *arūpa*, 'formlessness' (this according to S II 4). This could be explained as a process of wish-fulfilment. It is an established psychological fact that desire produces an emotional investment into its object and strong conscious images relating to the same object. If we, for instance, strongly desire a continuation of life, this desire will strengthen the conscious stream by adding more emotions and ideations, and this will be felt to be a *causal factor* towards new life. If this investment and strengthened conscious activity were *upādāna*, we would perhaps choose a translation like 'attachment', 'clinging', which is exactly the conventional translation.

On the other hand, we have already pointed out that *upādāna* means 'fuel' and that this meaning might be the reason for its position in the series. But as 'fuel' it would function as a causal factor producing a new life, as we just pointed out, and we arrive at another conventional translation, 'basis', 'foundation'.

After this hypothetical discussion, let us look at the texts. The conventional analysis is given in D II 58: *kāmūpādānaṃ vā diṭṭhūpādānaṃ vā sīlabbatūpādānaṃ vā attavādūpādānaṃ vā*, 'either clinging to sensual things, or clinging to (speculative) views, or to mere rules and ritual, or to belief in a self'. This explanation does not fit into the system very well, but we may note that the mentioned objects of clinging are all illusions, misunderstandings and prejudices: so they are mental contents inflating consciousness and leading it astray. The general function may therefore be as hypothesized.

The fuel-explanation is to be found in S IV 399 f. *Seyyathāpi Vaccha aggi sa-upādāno jalati no an-upādāno, evam eva khvāham Vaccha sa-upādānassa upapattim paññāpemi no anupādānassā ti.* 'Just as a fire with fuel blazes up, but not without fuel, even so do I declare rebirth to be for him who has fuel, not for him who is without fuel.' And further: *Yasmiṃ kho Vaccha samaye imañ ca kāyam nikkhipati satto ca aññataram kāyam anupanno hoti, tam ahaṃ tanhupādānaṃ vadāmi; tanhā hissa Vaccha tasmiṃ samaye upādānaṃ hotī ti.* 'At a time when a being lays aside this body and rises up again in another body, for that I declare desire to be the fuel (or: foundation). Indeed, desire is at that time the

fuel (foundation).' Here the birth of a new individual is said to be similar to the flaring up of an old fire provided with new fuel. The previous individual provides the fuel, and this fuel is here identified with *tanhā*, 'desire'. This simile is also used in Ta 1060, already referred to: 'Kassapa meditates without fuel (clinging), extinguished among the burning.'

The series of dependences was evidently never meant to be *the* definite series, since there are several modifications and alternatives. In S IV 86, there is a different series which the writer as a psychologist would certainly prefer. *Cakkhuṃ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇam; tiṇṇaṃ sangati phasso; phassapaccayā vedanā; vedanāpaccayā tanhā; tassāyeva tanhāya asesavirāganirodhā bhavanirodho; bhavanirodhā jātinirodho; jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti.* 'Depending on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is stimulation. Depending on stimulation is feeling. Depending on feeling is desire. But by utter passionless ceasing of desire comes ceasing of becoming. By ceasing of becoming comes ceasing of birth. By the ceasing of birth comes the ceasing of old age and death, of sorrow and grief, of woe, of lamentation and despair.' (The text repeats the same about the other senses and their objects.) We see that all the factors that we found difficult to explain above have disappeared. From the modern point of view it seems very logical to start from the sense processes: the objects, the sense-organs and the processes of stimulation. That these stimulations are received and evaluated in terms of feelings, is also good psychology. The needs and desires are nowadays considered to be as basic facts as the sense-processes, and they would not be placed in a dependent position by modern psychology, but the Buddhist way of thinking can also still be accepted. From the Buddhist point of view it is very significant, that the formulation changes on this point, because the desires are the great problem, and the series goes on to explain that rebirth is stopped, if desire is stopped. No *upādāna* is put in here, but desire leads directly to its fulfilment, and we can explain this transition, just as the others, as a result of immediate introspection into the inner causality: wishes produce images of their fulfilment.

The fate of the factors of the series in nibbāna is in principle

simple to explain and is expressed in the conventional way in our quotation. The key word is *nirodha*, 'cessation'. The interpretation of this should be the same as when referring to the *khandhā*: it must be taken literally only after death. It can be applied also to the living arahant, but imperfectly. The 'cessation' of all these factors does not mean that he is unconscious, or unable to function in this world. His ignorance is dispelled, and knowledge, wisdom has replaced it. His actions are free from kammic consequences, his consciousness calm and stable, his perceptual apparatus functions but is under control and does not activate desires. This interpretation will be further checked in our chapter on the personality of the arahant.

3. We have already discussed the word *citta* and have found that it is a name for the core of personality, mainly conscious but including also the subconscious processes on which continuity depends. It is not a soul, but it reminds of the 'ego' of Western psychology: the person knows that *citta* is what he is; he usually identifies himself with it but need not do so; he can observe his *citta*, discuss with it, train it, punish it, and so on.

To some extent, it is possible to map the relations between *citta* and other psychological factors. *Saññā* and *vedanā* are called *citta-sankhāra*, so we know that the perceptual processes affect *citta*. We also know that the working of *citta* is called *sankhāra*. The relation of *citta* to *viññāṇa* is not so clear-cut. There are texts that simply identify *viññāṇa* with *citta*, and others that identify *viññāṇa* with *saññā* and *vedanā*. *Viññāṇa* is more frequently said to be actively engaged in rebirth, and *citta* is more frequently said to attain nibbāna. Nibbāna is attained through the stopping of *viññāṇa*. The relations must be close, and probably *viññāṇa* is a function of *citta*, a name for certain *citta*-processes. When in the case of ordinary rebirth, both are said to undergo this process (never in the same context, always in different), then we may assume a simple identification. In the case of a living person, there should be no identification, because somebody should experience the function of *viññāṇa* and also experience that it has stopped: that is *citta*. *Citta* can go on functioning (*vijjā*, *paññā*, *mettā*, *karuṇa* are still to be found) and can observe *viññāṇa* and other *khandhā* as being still (cf. S III 45, quoted above).

The relation of *citta* to the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series has been indicated by relating the obsessions to *citta*, as two of them are contained in the series: *avijjā* and *bhava*. The factors, as *paṭiccasamuppanna* ('generated by dependence', M I 191) also become included in the series by implication. *Tanhā*, 'desire', is often said to belong to *citta*. We find, in short, that most of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-factors are either functions of *citta* or independent organic functions influencing it.

Ways to nibbāna

THE main road to nibbāna was *ariyo aṭṭhangiko maggo etassa nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya* (S IV 252), 'the noble eight-fold path for the realization of this nibbana':

sammādiṭṭhi, right view
sammāsankappo, right purpose
sammāvācā, right speech
sammākammanto, right action
sammā ājīvo, right livelihood
sammāvāyāmo, right effort
sammāsati, right mindfulness
sammāsamādhi, right concentration

The first two parts are concerned with intellectual understanding, the next three with moral training, and the last three with meditation techniques. They are not equally necessary: only the intellectual part seems really indispensable, when the moral qualifications are satisfactory. *Sīla* in itself cannot lead to nibbāna, but only to *puñña*, 'merit'; it is, however, an indispensable precondition.

1. Usually, we get the impression from the texts that nibbāna is attained only after some period of training, but there is also plenty of evidence that nibbāna could be attained by a sudden understanding, for instance as a result of a sermon. A typical passage is to be found in M III 20. *Imasmiṃ kho pana veyyākaraṇasmiṃ bhaññamāne saṭṭhimattānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ anupādāya āsavehi cittāni vimucciṃsu*, 'And while this exposition was being spoken, the minds of as many as sixty monks were freed from the obsessions with no foundation left.' In most of these cases, the persons that had this experience were monks, who could be supposed to have previous training in meditation, but it could happen also to lay people: Mahāvagga, p. 16 (cf. Ta 117), tells

how a rich merchant and his son Yasa attained nibbāna after only a short instruction without any knowledge of meditation.

2. Let us next see whether there were any preconditions to be met before entering on the road to nibbāna.

External conditions do not seem to have existed. Monkhood was considered a very helpful way of life and was greatly recommended but no condition for attaining nibbāna. Both sexes were considered equal in this pursuit, social position or race was of no consequence (A III 385), and also not personal appearance: one of the Buddha's most highly esteemed disciples was a dwarf.

To attain nibbāna was easy to some and difficult to others. Kammic differences may account for these differences. As the achievement was greatly intellectual in nature, it must have been facilitated by high intelligence. As one of the arahants expressed it in Ta 71: *Susukhumanipuṇatthadassinā matikusalena nivāta-vuttinā saṃsevitabuddhasīlinā nibbānaṃ na hi tena dullabhan ti*, 'For him who can see the truth, although it is very subtle and refined, and has a skilful mind but still is humble in conduct and follows the Buddha's norm—for him nibbāna is not hard to find.' Two basic traits are stressed here: ability to understand and humbleness. Cf. D II 123: *paññā-paribhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammad eva āsavehi vimuccati*, 'a mind supported by understanding is set quite free from the *āsavā*'. Two other traits are mentioned in S II 195: *anātāpī anottāpī abhabbo sambodhāya abhabbo nibbānāya abhabbo anuttarassa yogakkhemassa adhigamāya*, 'a man without energy and without carefulness is unable to attain to insight, to nibbāna, to security from bonds'. But on the whole, the Buddha seems to have believed that a person who really wanted (i.e. was kammically mature enough to want) to attain nibbāna, also was capable of doing so and he stressed the importance of training infinitely more than natural endowment.

3. The Nikāyas are full of enumerations of bad traits that should be got rid of, but how to do it is rarely said. The modern tendency to treat all moral problems as behaviour problems and to correct them by means of behaviour training and 're-conditioning' was not invented. The Buddha believed in self-control, and one should be *kāyena saṃvuto, vācāya saṃvuto, manasā saṃvuto*, 'self-restrained in behaviour, word, and thought' (D III 97), and

he believed that the human being was free to stop doing what he did not any more want to do. But he was well acquainted with another type of training: training of the mind through meditation, and he believed more in the power of the mind and intelligence than we are used to do. His moral training followed the principle of keeping good ideas constantly in mind and gently, but persistently, pushing everything undesirable out of consciousness. This method would seem to be a typical example of what Western psychologists call repression and would seem to lead to the same effects. For an idea pushed out of consciousness is, according to the modern view, not annihilated but continues its subterranean life and may produce neurotic symptoms. However, the whole process, as exercised in meditation, is, as we shall see later, very different from the process of repression, and 'dissolution' may very well turn out to be a more correct word. If an idea, e.g. a certain egoistic desire, is 'dissolved' instead of repressed, it may well be a case of real, and harmless, disappearance. This whole method needs further, especially experimental, investigation.

4. The two main methods are meditation and understanding, (*paññā*). They are usually combined, as it is stated in Dh 372, *n'atthi jhānam apaññassa paññā n'atthi ajjhāyato: yaṃhi jhānaṃ ca paññā ca sa ve nibbānasantike*, 'There is no meditation for one who is without understanding, no understanding for one without meditation; he who has both meditation and understanding is close to nibbāna.' That this combination gives the best result, although the ultimate achievement is attributed to *paññā*, becomes clear from D II 91: *samādhiparibhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā, paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammad eva āsavehi vimuccati seyyathīdaṃ kāmāsavā bhavāsavā diṭṭhāsavā avijjāsavā ti*, 'Understanding when reinforced with concentration, will produce good result and profit; when the mind is reinforced with understanding, it is quite set free from the obsessions, that is, from sense-pleasure, becoming, wrong theories, and ignorance.' A common formulation of the relation between meditation and understanding can be found, e.g. in A IV 448, where the Buddha tells Ānanda about his own experience: *So kho ahaṃ Ānanda, aparena samayena sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma*

saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharāmi, paññāya ca me disvā āsavā parikkhayaṃ agamaṃsu, 'And presently I passed wholly beyond the sphere of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation and entered and stayed in the ending of ideation-and-feeling, and by seeing and understanding, my obsessions were destroyed.' The experience of nibbāna evidently will not come as an automatic result of even the highest level of meditation, but an act of understanding is also needed. This is also expressed in the compressed formula, D III 230: *Āsavānaṃ khayo paññāya sacchikaranīyo*, 'The destruction of the obsessions is to be realized by means of understanding.'

A further confirmation can be found in U 33: *evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato bhavatanhā pahīyati . . ., sabbato tanhānaṃ khayā asesavirāganirodho nibbānaṃ*. 'Whoever sees this (that by the ending of *upādāna* there is no production of suffering) as it really is by perfect understanding, his desire of becoming disappears . . .; by the complete extinction of desires there is dispassion, cessation without remainder, nibbāna.' This would seem to imply the meaning, that a complete intellectual understanding of the relations expressed in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series will bring about the disappearing of desire, which is nibbāna. This is also implied in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series itself, as the first link of this is *avijjā*, 'ignorance'; a person who has eradicated ignorance is called *paññā-vimutto*, 'released by understanding'. See the definition in A I 61: *avijjā-virāgā paññāvimuttī ti*, 'through dispelling of ignorance comes release by understanding'.

In the Nikāyas we find many enumerations of factors leading to nibbāna. There is, for instance, the line in D II 123: *Sīlaṃ samādhi paññā ca vimutti ca anuttarā*, 'morality, concentration, understanding and the highest release'. And a similar list is to be found in S V 200: *Pañcimāni bhikkhave indriyāni. Katamāni pañca? Saddhindriyaṃ viriyindriyaṃ satindriyaṃ samādhindriyam paññindriyaṃ. Imesaṃ kho bhikkhave pañcindriyānam samattā paripūrattā arahaṃ hoti.* 'There are these five functions. What five? The function of faith, of energy, of mindfulness, of concentration and of understanding. By the completion and fulfilment of these five functions one becomes an arahant.' (Cf. the collection of similar lists compiled by Jayatilleke, 4, p. 396). In lists of this

type we usually find *paññā* as the final factor before nibbāna and after the meditation factors, *sati* and *samādhi*. There are, however, also lists that do not mention the meditational factors, e.g. A III 434: *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu saddho hoti, hirīmā hoti, ottāpī hoti, āraddhaviriyo hoti, paññavā hoti, kāye ca jīvite ca anapekho hoti. Imehi kho bhikkhave chahi dhammehi sammanāgato bhikkhu bhabbo aggaṃ dhammaṃ arahattaṃ sacchikātun ti.* 'Here a monk has faith, modesty, conscientiousness, firm energy, understanding and is without desire for action and life. If a monk is provided with these six things, he will be able to realize the chief thing, arahantship.'

By the quotations given so far we have proved the close connection between understanding and the attainment of nibbāna, but we have also indicated that there are two ways to nibbāna, both involving understanding. The difference between these are well described and documented by Jayatilleke (4, p. 466 f). The method which includes both meditation and understanding permits the person to verify for himself, by means of superknowledge, all the doctrines of Buddhism, and nothing would need to be accepted on faith only. In S I 191, the Buddha says that of the five hundred arahants surrounding him, *saṭṭhi bhikkhū ubhato-bhāga-vimuttā atha itare paññāvimuttā ti*, 'sixty are freed in both ways, and the others (i.e. 320, as 120 had some special powers, certainly in addition to being "freed-in-both-ways") are freed by understanding'. This distinction agrees with a classification given in D III 105: seven types of people are mentioned, of which the two first are *ubhato-bhāga-vimutto* and *paññā-vimutto*.

A person who is *paññā-vimutto* is, therefore, a person who has not meditated and has no super knowledge but is still an arahant. It is explained exactly so in S II 119 ff, where a number of disciples admit that they have none of the powers usually claimed to result from meditation. The reason they give is: *atha kho paññā-vimuttā mayan ti*, 'we have been freed by understanding'. Usually a distinction is made between *cetovimutto* and *paññāvimutto*, and they are frequently mentioned together. E.g. (D III 78) *bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ ceto-vimuttiṃ paññā-vimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*, 'By the destruction of the

obsessions, a monk enters and stays in that obsession-free freedom of mind and freedom by understanding which he by himself has experienced and realized.' A person who has attained to these two types of *vimutti*, is called *ubhato-bhāga-vimutta*, 'freed both ways' (D II 71, already quoted).

In A I 61, *cetovimutti* is derived from *samatha*, 'calm', and *paññāvimutti* from *vipassanā*, 'introspection'. *Samatho ca bhikkhave bhāvito kam attham anubhoti? Cittaṃ bhāvīyati. Cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ kaṃ atthaṃ anubhoti? Yo rāgo so pahīyati.—Vipassanā bhikkhave bhāvitā kam attham anubhoti? Paññā bhāvīyati. Paññā bhāvitā kam attham anubhoti? Yā avijjā sā pahīyati: rāgupakkiliṭṭham vā bhikkhave cittaṃ na vimuccati avijjupakkiliṭṭhā vā paññā na bhāvīyati. Imā kho bhikkhave rāgavirāgā cetovimutti avijjāvirāgā paññāvimuttī ti.* 'If calm is developed, what profit will it lead to? The mind is developed. If the mind is developed, what profit will it lead to? All desire is abandoned. If introspection is developed, what profit will it lead to? Understanding is developed. If understanding is developed, what profit will it lead to? All ignorance is abandoned. A mind defiled by desire is not freed, nor is understanding developed if defiled by ignorance. Indeed, this ceasing of desire is the freedom of mind and this ceasing of ignorance is the freedom by understanding.' This text tells us that *cetovimutti* is connected with the development of the mind and methods applied in order to eradicate desire: this probably refers to meditation. However, much more is involved in *cetovimutti*, which cannot be explained here.

Paññā is here said to be a fruit of introspection. But it can be derived from other sources. D III 219 speaks about three types of *paññā*: *cintā-mayā paññā, suta-mayā paññā, bhāvanā-mayā paññā*, 'understanding based on (or consisting in?) thinking, learning, development'. This suggests that *paññā* is mainly, not a process of investigation, learning or training, not the struggle with a material at all, but a final act of understanding, when the structure becomes clear and completely mastered. The *Gestalt* psychology of our time has recognized that the laws of thinking are very similar to the laws of perception and that they may perhaps be derived from the latter. In the same way, *paññā* is sometimes described as a process similar to visual

perception, and, indeed, *paññā* and *ñāṇa* are often combined with verbs like *passati* and *dassati*, 'see'. Such a description is, for instance, found in M I 279 f. 'It is like a pure, limpid, serene pool of water in which a man with vision standing on the bank might see oysters and shells, also gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish moving about and keeping still. It might occur to him: This pool of water is pure, limpid, serene. . . .' And then the text continues: *evam-eva kho . . . bhikkhu: idaṃ dukkhan ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*, 'even so a monk understands as it really is: this is suffering', etc. And further: *Tassa evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavā pi cittaṃ vimuccati*, 'when he knows thus, sees thus, his mind is freed from the obsession of sense-pleasures.' The text goes on to mention the other obsessions and ends up with an arahant-formula. This is a very concrete description of the process involved: a man sees a scene and then makes a conscious reflection by means of which he understands the meaning of everything he sees; this is an act of *paññā*. In the same way, he can by introspection see himself, how he is caught in a vicious circle of causality, how everything in his life is caused and only leads to suffering, further exactly what those causes are and how the law can be used to counter-act the effects—and we can understand how this vision and understanding can lead to an experience of liberation. Even dynamic factors (desires, emotions) may be influenced, diverted or dissolved, by a causal analysis of their origin and their effects. This is not commonly recognized in contemporary psychology, but the matter has never been properly investigated. The early Buddhists may have observed that this is possible, as we repeatedly find phrases like *cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbalī-karaṇe* (D III 101), 'weakening the corruptions of the mind by understanding'. It is not quite clear what is meant by the 'corruptions', but certainly emotional and dynamic factors were included.

A very precise account of how *paññā* was held to function in such cases can be found in M I 91: *Yato ca kho Mahānāma ariyasāvakassa: appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo ti evam-etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatr' eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukhaṃ adhigacchati aññañ-ca tato santataraṃ atha kho so anāvaṭṭī kāmesu hoti*. 'But when an ariyan disciple

thinks: "Sensual pleasures give little satisfaction but much suffering and much trouble, and the danger from them is greater", and he comes to see this, as it really is, through perfect understanding, and he attains zest and happiness apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unskilled processes, and something better than that, then he is not seduced by the sense-pleasures.' Here, sensuality is analysed ideationally, dissolved and replaced by other values, and a new happiness is attained by substitution.

5. We must finally describe how meditation is related to nibbāna. It is a very extensive subject, and we can deal with it only briefly. Our chief problems are to find out what psychological purposes are served by these methods, how the methods conduce to the attainment of nibbāna and how some psychological factors are affected by the training.

The methods of meditation are traditionally divided into two groups, *sati*, here translated 'mindfulness', and *samādhi*, here called 'concentration'. We shall deal with these two groups separately, beginning with the *sati* group.

The *sati* exercises are usually described as preparatory to *samādhi*. Here are some of the exercises mentioned in the main text, *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna suttanta* (D II 290 ff):

(a) A certain bodily function is selected and then closely followed by the attention. For instance, breathing may be selected. *So sato va assasati, sato passasati. Dīghaṃ vā assasanto 'Dīghaṃ assasāmīti' pajānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto 'Dīghaṃ passasāmīti' pajānāti* (D II 291). 'He breathes out mindful and breathes in mindful. When making a long exhalation he knows: "I am making a long exhalation", and when making a long inhalation he knows: "I am making a long inhalation.'" This means that the entire consciousness is directed towards the breathing process. Every single aspect of it becomes conscious, the sensations from the nose, the throat, the muscles of the abdomen. No other ideas or sensations are allowed to disturb this constant watching of the breathing process.

Or *sati* may be practised while walking. The meditating person walks slowly and tries to follow each muscular movement with his consciousness, lifting the right foot, moving forwards, putting the foot down, contact with the floor, etc., and all the time reflecting that he is making these observations. Again, full

absorption in this process is required, and nothing else is permitted to enter consciousness.

Or some purely mental process may be observed in the same way: *bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno 'Sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmīti' pajānāti* (D II 298). 'While feeling a pleasant feeling, the monk knows: "I am feeling a pleasant feeling."' In this case, a pleasant feeling is exposed to persistent conscious observation. No attempt is made to change or suppress the feeling, it is only objectively observed. Other types of mental contents are similarly watched. If his mind is full of desire, he knows that it is so, if it is free from desire, he knows that it is so (D II 299).

(b) These exercises are passive and are performed in a relaxed state of both mind and body. They may be combined with somewhat more active exercises. When meditating on the body, one may, for instance, call up the idea of the impermanency of the body or concretely visualize one's own body in a state of decomposition.

(c) The exercises may go on to include intellectual analyses. The body is analysed into its parts, hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, etc., and the analysis may go on to a higher level of abstraction, and the body is seen as built up from the four primary elements: earth, water, heat, and air (D II 294). The own personality is similarly analysed according to the usual, doctrinal lines of thought (D II 301 f): . . . *bhikkhu dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati pañcas' upādānakkhandhesu; . . . bhikkhu 'Iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthagamo'* . . . 'a monk, as to ideas, continues to consider these from the point of view of the five base-factors . . .; the monk (reflects): "Such is form (body), such is the genesis of form, such is the going to rest of form"' (and so on, regarding the other *khandhā*). Then comes a different approach: . . . *bhikkhu dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati chasu ajjhattika-bāhiresu āyatanesu; . . . bhikkhu cakkhuñ ca pajānāti, rūpe ca pajānāti, yañ ca tad ubhayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati saṃyojanaṃ tañ ca pajānāti, yathā ca anuppannassa saṃyojanassa uppādo hoti tañ ca pajānāti, yathā ca uppannassa saṃyojanassa pahānaṃ hoti tañ ca pajānāti, yathā ca pahīnassa saṃyojanassa āyatiṃ anuppādo hoti tañ ca pajānāti*, 'the monk, as to ideas, continues to consider ideas from the point of view of the six internal and external sense-fields; . . . the monk under-

stands the eye; he understands the forms; he understands the fetter that arises on account of these two; he understands how a new fetter is produced; he understands how to get rid of a fetter that has arisen; he understands how a fetter once got rid of will not be produced again' (etc., for the other senses).

After this, the analysis goes on to include the seven factors of enlightenment and the four noble truths. This description of the *sati*-exercises shows how *sati* naturally leads over to *paññā* and how close the connections are between different parts of the Way.

(d) The Buddhist disciple may finally experiment with deliberate changes of perception. We have, for instance, a group of eight fields of mastery (*aṭṭha abhibhāyatanāni*, D II 110). The exact meaning of them is unclear, and without a thorough investigation it is preferable not to speculate. But they certainly involve ability to produce changes in perception. The fifth field of mastery is described as follows: *Ajjhattaṃ arūpasaññī eko bahiddhā-rūpāni passati nīlāni nīla-vaṇṇāni nīlanidassanāni nīla-nibhāsāni*, 'without ideating form internally, a man sees external forms as blue, blue-coloured, blue-looking, blue-reflecting'. The sentence seems to refer to experiments with subjective change of the colours of seen objects. In one phase of the experiment, all objects are seen as blue, in the next (the sixth field) as yellow, then as red, etc.

In S V 119, an exercise aiming at a change of feeling-tone is mentioned: *So sace ākankhati: Appaṭikkūle paṭikkūlasaññī vihareyyanti, paṭikkūlasaññī tattha viharati*. 'If he desires: "Let me stay conscious of repugnance in what is not repugnant," he stays so, conscious of repugnance.' Then other variations of this exercise are described. In this way a meditating disciple could learn to master his evaluating mechanism completely: a disgusting object could be experienced as neutral or pleasant, and a pleasant object could be experienced as unpleasant.

After this classification of some of the most characteristic *sati*-exercises, we will turn to the question of their purposes. These exercises are in many ways related to the ultimate aim of Buddhism.

(a) There is, first of all, the general purpose to keep the mental contents under constant control. A disciple should be able to

decide what ideas, even perceptions, should be allowed into his consciousness and he should be able to keep other ideas out. He should also be able to keep his conscious contents fixed and still. This aim is very frequently described in the Nikāyas, e.g. in S IV 112: *Etha tuṃhe bhikkhave indriyesu guttadvārā viharatha! Cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā mā nimittaggāhino ahuvattha mānuvyañjanaggāhino, yatvādhikaraṇam enaṃ cakkhundriyam asaṃvutaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhā domanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāsaveyyuṃ tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjatha! Rakkhatha cakkhundriyaṃ cakkhundriye saṃvaram āpajjatha!* 'Come you, monks, remain guarding the doors of the senses! Seeing a form with the eyes, be not misled by its outer view, nor by its lesser details. But since coveting and discontent, evil, unskilled processes might overwhelm one who dwells with the visual sense uncontrolled, you should apply yourselves to such control, set a guard over the visual sense and attain control of it.' The same is then said about the other senses. How a contemporary layman understood this we can see from the continuation of the text. The listening king gave an example from his own life: *Aham pi . . . yasmiṃ samaye arakkhiteneva kāyena arakkhitāya vācāya arakkhitena cittena anupaṭṭhitāya satiyā asaṃvutehi indriyehi antepuraṃ pavisāmi, ativiya maṃ tasmiṃ samaye lobhadhammā parisahanti.* 'I myself, whenever I enter my harem with body, speech and mind unguarded, without fixed mindfulness, without control of my senses—then lustful processes overwhelm me.' Mindfulness was therefore used as a means of controlling the perceptual and ideational apparatus.

(b) *Sati*-exercises were further used to produce relaxation of body and mind. '*Passambhayaṃ kāyasankhāraṃ assasissāmi*' *ti sikkhati*, . . . '*passambhayaṃ cittasankhāraṃ assasissāmi*' *ti sikkhati*. 'Calming down bodily activity I shall breathe out: so he trains himself . . . Calming down mental activity I shall breathe out: so he trains himself' (A V 111). Mindfulness was considered the normal way of meeting the vicissitudes of this life, even death: *nikkhipissaṃ imaṃ kāyaṃ sampajāno paṭissato* (Ta 1002), 'I shall lay down this body, knowing and mindful.' The Buddha's disciple, Anuruddha, was asked, S V 302, why all pains that he met with in life did not make any impression on his mind, and he replied: *Catūsu me āvuso satipaṭṭhānesu*

supatiṭṭhitacittassa viharato uppannā sārīrikā dukkhā vedanā cittaṃ na pariyādāya tiṭṭhanti, 'Because I stay with my mind well settled in the four applications of mindfulness, arising bodily pains do not overwhelm my mind.' It is also said, on the same page, that the arahant 'generally spends his time with his mind well settled in these four applications of mindfulness': *arahaṃ . . . imesu catusu satipaṭṭhānesu supatiṭṭhacitto bahulaṃ viharati*. And thanks to his exercises in mindfulness, the arahant is said to live a very pleasant life: *ye ca . . . bhikkhū arahanto . . ., tesam ānāpānasatisamādhi bhāvito bahulīkato diṭṭheva dhamme sukhavihārāya ceva saṃvattati satisampajaññāya ca*, 'For those monks who are arahants . . ., concentration on mindful in-breathing and out-breathing, if developed and seriously practiced, conduces to pleasant living and mindful understanding even in this life.'

(c) As already pointed out, these exercises lead to better intellectual understanding and provide a foundation for *paññā*. By visualizing the own person as something that arises and disappears, something that is built up from innumerable parts that continuously change and finally dissolve, the *anicca*- and *anatta*-doctrines are understood and even proved.

(d) The world is, according to Buddhist opinion, impermanent, ever changing, and therefore a cause of suffering. So is also the individual person. The practicing Buddhist must therefore make himself independent of these things and look for something more permanent, more pleasant, more valuable. Now it is easy to come to this conclusion by intellectual reasoning, but to *perceive* the world and the own person as valueless is another matter. *Sati*-exercises may be helpful, if the instability of perception is stressed. Even normal perception is not stable. There are, for instance, always double images, although they are usually disregarded. Straight lines do not seem straight, the depth vision is not always correct, etc. By consciously attending to things like after-images, double images, the pulsating in the eyes, the changes during movement, it is possible to get the impression that this is a very shaky world. The world may very well seem unreal, lacking in substance. In neurasthenic states, this impression is enhanced, and the affected person actually has the impression that the things around him are like 'a lump of

foam' (*phena-piṇḍa*). Impressions of this type were actively produced by some *sati*-exercises aiming at changing the impressions, e.g. making the objects seem all blue. Through these exercises a feeling of unreality, impermanence, and diminished value could be created.

(e) One of the most important effects of mindfulness was to purify activity, to free activity from kammic consequences and therefore to promote morality. This is expressed in many ways in the Nikāyas. *Ekāyano ayaṃ . . . maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā . . ., yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā* (D II 290), 'This is the one and only path leading to the purification of beings . . ., namely the four applications of mindfulness.' According to S IV 112, already quoted, mindfulness is a way of getting rid of 'evil, unskilled processes'. All actions normally have a moral aspect and therefore have causal consequences for both the present and the future life, because they are performed with desire. During mindfulness, desire and emotions, actually all types of mental content except the action itself, are kept out of consciousness, and they can have no causal effects at all, in a kammic sense. This is indicated in Ta 807: *khiyyati nopaciyyati evaṃ so caratī sato; evaṃ apacinato dukkhaṃ santike nibbāna vuccati*. 'For him there is diminishing, no heaping up; so he lives mindful; so he does not collect suffering; about him it is said: "nibbāna is near".' The 'heaping up', here mentioned, certainly refers to the kammic effects of actions, and its disappearence is here explicitly related to mindfulness. That the activities are 'calmed' does not mean that no more actions are performed, rather that they should be performed mindfully. The monk arahants were not inactive; when they were not meditating, they were busy begging their food, visiting new places, explaining the doctrine, settling disputes, etc., and the lay arahants had still their worldly occupations. In Ti 275 it is said about the Buddhist monks: *kammakāmā analasā kamma-seṭṭhassa kārakā*, 'they are fond of work, they are not lazy, they do the best work', and further, in 277: *kāyakammaṃ suci nesaṃ vacīkammañ ca tādisaṃ, manokammaṃ suci nesaṃ*, 'their bodily work is pure, and so is their speech-activity; their mental work is pure.'

Mindfulness is therefore considered as one of the most im-

portant means for attaining moral perfection. Desires, nervousness, emotions and bad conscience disturb both the mind and behaviour and create detrimental affects for the future. By means of *sati* they can all be kept out of consciousness and by this process they are believed to become eradicated completely. Even the *āsavā*, the most persistent of the detrimental ideas that invade consciousness (the word probably means 'influxes') can be influenced by means of *sati*, as it is said in S II 54: *yathāsataṃ viharantaṃ āsavā nānusavanti attānaṃ ca nāvajānāmi*, 'I do not deny that I (*attānaṃ*) live so mindful that the influxes no longer flow.' In this way, this type of exercise goes a long way towards the attainment of both understanding and nibbāna.

The highest type of meditation is called *samādhi*, 'concentration'. A certain level of mental and behavioural development is required before these exercises can be undertaken. To these requirements belong spotless moral behaviour, self-control and proficiency in mindfulness. We find this well summed up in D I 71: *So iminā ca ariyena sīla-kkhandhena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena indriya-saṃvarena samannāgato iminā ca ariyena sati-sampajaññena samannāgato imāya ca ariyāya santuṭṭhiyā samannāgato vivittaṃ senāsanaṃ bhajati, araññaṃ rukkha-mūlaṃ pabbataṃ kandaraṃ giriguhaṃ susānaṃ vana-patthaṃ abbhokāsaṃ palālapuñjaṃ*. 'Endowed with the whole body of noble virtues, with noble sense-control, with noble mindfulness and comprehension, and with noble contentment, he chooses a solitary resting-place—a forest, the foot of a tree, a hill, a mountain glen, a rocky cave, a charnal place, a heap of straw in the open field.' Here, the background is given, and a suitable setting for the new exercises is suggested.

The first task is to master the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), namely *kāma-cchanda*, 'sensuality and desire', *vyāpāda*, 'agressiveness', *thīna-middha*, 'inactivity and drowsiness', *uddhacca-kukkucca*, 'nervousness', *vicikicchā*, 'doubt'. This is done by means of mindfulness (D II 300), and when they are conquered, the meditating disciple is prepared to enter into the first stage of *samādhi*, called the first *jhāna*. His mental state at this moment is one of profound peace, satisfaction, joy and freedom: *Tass' ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato pāmujjaṃ jāyati, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pīti-manassa kāyo passambhati, passad-*

dha-kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti, sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati (D I 73). 'When he sees that these five hindrances are eliminated in himself, then happiness is born, to happiness joy is added, with his mood joyful his body becomes relaxed, his relaxed body feels at ease, and as he feels at ease his mind becomes concentrated (enters *samādhi*).' There are nine stages of *samādhi*. They are briefly characterized below.

Characteristics present	*Characteristics eliminated*
1. *vivekaja pītisukha*, 'joy and happiness born of seclusion' *vitakka, vicāra*, 'reasoning, investigation'	*kāma*, 'sensuality' *akusalā dhammā*, 'unskilled processes'
2. *ajjhatta sampasādana*, 'inner tranquillity' *cetaso ekodibhāva*, 'one-pointedness of mind' *samādhija pītisukha*, 'joy and happiness born of concentration'	*vitakka, vicāra*, 'reasoning, investigation' *vivekaja pītisukha*, 'joy and happiness born of seclusion'
3. *upekhako*, 'on-looker', 'neutral' *upekhā-sukha*, 'happiness of neutrality' *sato*, 'mindful' *sampajāno*, 'understanding'	*pīti*, 'joy'
4. *upekhā-sati-pārisuddhi*, 'pure neutrality and mindfulness'	*sukha, dukkha*, 'happiness, pain' *somanassa, domanassa*, 'elation, dejection' *upekhā-sukha*, 'happiness of neutrality'

Characteristics present	*Characteristics eliminated*
5. *ākāsānañcāyatana*, 'the sphere of infinite space'	*rūpa-saññā*, 'idea of form' *paṭigha-saññā*, 'idea of sense-reaction' *nānatta-saññā*, 'idea of diversity'
6. *viññāṇañcāyatana*, 'the sphere of infinite consciousness'	*ākāsānancāyatana*, 'the sphere of infinite space'
7. *ākiñcaññāyatana*, 'the sphere of nothingness'	*viññāṇañcāyatana*, 'the sphere of infinite consciousness'
8. *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*, 'the sphere of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation'	*ākiñcaññāyatana*, 'the sphere of nothingness'
9. *saññāvedayitanirodha*, 'cessation of ideation and feeling'	*saññā, vedanā*, 'ideation, feeling'

We find that these are successive stages of concentration and abstraction. The exercise starts from a rather normal state of consciousness, although all sense-desires and other types of emotional and unethical contents are already eliminated. Next, all thought-activity and some pleasant feelings (or perhaps rather emotions, as *pīti* is not a form of *vedanā*, but something stronger than that; in M II 204 it is said to be like a fire that burns without fuel, as it has nothing to do with sense-pleasures and is not 'unskilled'). On the third level, more of the pleasant feelings disappear, and mindfulness, i.e. an extremely controlled and unified consciousness, appears although there are still some weak feelings left. These feelings disappear altogether on the fourth level (although the more elementary feelings classified as *vedanā* are still there), and a mindful neutrality prevails. Then most of the contents disappear from conscious-

ness, and the disciple visualizes the idea that space is unlimited. This idea evidently still has some form and is visualized as something external. On the sixth level the extra-ideation is replaced by a final introspection, and the unlimited space is changed into an internal emptiness, an empty consciousness. But this is still an idea, and there is still a distinction between internal and external. A little more of this distinction disappears on the seventh level, when the idea 'nothing exists' is produced. The eighth level is transitory and not always mentioned as a separate level. The final task is to make every idea, every *saññā* disappear, even the idea of nothingness. This is done on the level of *nirodha*, where the last trace of differentiation is gone and no idea and no feeling is experienced.

The final level of *nirodha* is sometimes by European scholars explained as unconsciousness. We sometimes get that impression from the texts themselves. It is, for instance, said about Sāriputta, that he got a terrible blow on his head by a demon once when he had attained 'a certain level of concentration' (*aññataraṃ samādhiṃ*, U 39). He did not notice anything but admitted afterwards that he felt a slight headache (*sise thokaṃ dukkhaṃ*)! And we have the story about the Buddha who, although *saññī samāno jāgaro*, 'conscious and awake', did not notice that 'the falling rain began to beat and to splash, and the lightnings to flash forth, and the thunderbolts to crash' (D II 131). It is not said that the Buddha on this occasion was absorbed in the *nirodha*-state, and this may explain the word *saññī*, 'conscious'. But the terminology is not always strict, and some sort of conscious activity is certainly retained, as it is so often said that on this level, understanding is attained, and with it a knowledge that the obsessions are destroyed and that this is the last birth. It is, therefore, an act of knowledge or conviction, an impression of ultimate integration and holistic comprehension that in some way can coexist with an otherwise totally undifferentiated consciousness. It may therefore also not be correct to call it a state of trance, as trances are usually said to be accompanied by concrete visions and strong emotional experiences. The *nirodha*-state is certainly pleasant but in a very vague way. It is mainly emptiness but is accompanied by intellectual clarity.

Western writers sometimes identify the *nirodha*-level with nibbāna (e.g. Northrop, 7, p. 350). It is clear from what we have already said that this cannot be true, but a few more indications may be mentioned.

Meditation does not automatically lead to a realization of nibbāna, as Anuruddha points out, A I 282: *Āraddhaṃ kho pana me viriyaṃ asallīnaṃ upaṭṭhitā sati asamuṭṭhā passaddho kāyo asāraddho samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ekaggaṃ. Atha ca pana me na anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccatī 'ti*. 'Strenuous and unshaken is my energy. Mindfulness is set up in me untroubled. My body is calmed, not perturbed. My mind is concentrated, one-pointed. Yet for all that my mind is not freed from the obsessions without grasping.' In M III 37–44, it is said that also an evil man may be able to practise meditation and reach the eighth level. As to the *nirodha*-level, our text keeps silent about the evil man and only points out that a good man may use it as stepping-stone to understanding.

On the other hand, it seems that nibbāna can be realized on any one of the levels. See, for instance, M I 435 f: . . . *bhikkhu* . . . *paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. So yad-eva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ sankhāragataṃ viññāṇagataṃ te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpeti, so tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpetvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati: etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasankhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo tanhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan ti. So tattha-ṭṭhito āsavānaṃ khayaṃ pāpunāti*. '. . . a monk enters and remains in the first *jhāna*. Whatever occurs there of form, feeling, ideation, activity or consciousness—he sees them as impermanent, suffering, a disease, a boil, a sting, a misfortune, an affliction, as alien, as decay, empty, not-self. He turns his mind from these things, and when he has done that, he focusses his mind on the deathless state, thinking: "this is peace, this is the excellent, namely, the calming of all activities, the rejection of all clinging, the destruction of desire, dispassion, ceasing, nibbāna." If he is steadfast in this, he attains destruction of the obsessions.' Exactly the same is said about all the seven first levels, and this fact probably means that all the levels are equal in this respect:

the destruction of the obsessions can be experienced on any of them.

The same conclusion can be drawn from other texts. M I 270 describes, how nibbāna can be realized with the fourth level as starting-point, by this process: when the monk sees a form with his eyes (on this level, there is evidently still perception of external objects!), he does not feel attracted but also not repelled: by *sati* he gets rid of emotional reactions. He still feels *vedanā*, 'feelings', but 'he does not delight in that feeling, does not welcome it or persist in clinging to it' (*so taṃ vedanaṃ nābhinandati nābhivadati nājjhosāya tiṭṭhati*). Therefore, he has no *nandī*, 'feeling of delight'. But without *nandī*, there is no *upādāna*, and without *upādāna*, there is no *bhava*; and so the argument goes on, according to the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series, and it is proved that the whole 'mass of suffering' (*dukkhakkhandha*) is stopped. It is also significant that the Buddha died in a state of meditation: he passed through all the nine levels, but when he expired he was on the fourth level, not on the highest. On one occasion (A IV 448) he told Ānanda about his own attainment of nibbāna: *Yāvakīvañ cāhaṃ Ānanda imā nava anupubbavihāra-samāpattiyo na evaṃ anulomapaṭilomaṃ samāpajjiṃ pi vuṭṭhahim pi, neva tāvāhaṃ . . . sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho paccaññasiṃ*. 'And as long as I did not attain to and emerge from these nine successive states, both forwards and backwards, I did not completely, as one wholly awakened, realize the full perfect awakening.' This text shows that all the levels of *samādhi* were considered as an instrument, a means to an end. None of the levels *was* nibbāna, and he had to emerge from them all, but all could be used as a platform for the final realization.

When this has been said, it can still be admitted that very frequently the experiences obtained during meditation were considered extremely important and therefore could be included in the definitions of nibbāna itself. Meditation was, after all, the means by which the monk could experience for himself how the Buddhist principles functioned: he could observe how the desires disappeared, how consciousness was unified and stopped, how the internal causal process led to its own destruction. By super-knowledge, he could also verify all the Buddhist doctrines

(see Jayatilleke, 4, p. 466). This explains why it has never been possible to give a short and clearcut definition of nibbāna. It has never been possible to ascertain exactly how much of the meditational experiences are essential. If much is included, we may get an impression of a metaphysical world and transcendent knowledge, if little is included we get an impression of a pure personality state or conscious state, where intellectual clarity and emotional equanimity prevail.

Finally a few words about some of the psychological factors.

We have already seen from M I 436 and M I 270 that the personality factors still function, at least on the lower levels of *samādhi* but are divested of value. Forms are seen but evoke no interest. Feelings give rise to no desire. On a higher level they all go to rest. Consciousness is expanded to become unlimited (*viharati appamāṇacetaso*, M I 270, 'he stays with immeasurable mind'). Ideation is changed: *Siyā Ānanda bhikkhuno tathārūpo samādhi-paṭilābho, yathā neva paṭhaviyaṃ paṭhavisaññī assa, na āpasmiṃ āposaññī assa . . . saññī ca pana assā 'ti* (A V 7). 'A monk's attainment of concentration may be such that he is unconscious of the earth in earth, he is unconscious of the water in water . . ., but still he is conscious.' Ideas and perceptions are still there but they seem less real and have no importance.

Of special interest is *viññāṇa*, as it is said to form the link to the next existence. As one of the *khandhā* it is rejected (M I 436, quoted previously) but not extinguished, but as one link in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series it has ultimately to 'cease' (and: *Ayaṃ . . . aṭṭhangiko maggo viññāṇanirodhagāminī paṭipadā*, 'this eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness', S III 61). In the ordinary exposition of *samādhi*, it is mentioned only on the sixth level, where it is said to become unlimited. However, in M I 293, the fifth, sixth, and seventh levels are attributed to *mano-viññāṇa*, 'the consciousness of the internal sense': *Nissaṭṭhena h'āvuso pañcahi indriyehi parisuddhena mano-viññāṇena kiṃ neyyan ti?—Nissaṭṭhena h'āvuso pañcahi indriyehi parisuddhena manoviññāṇena ananto ākāso-ti ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ neyyaṃ, anantaṃ viññāṇan-ti viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ neyyaṃ, na-tthi kiñcīti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ neyyan-ti.* 'What is knowable by purified consciousness of the internal sense isolated from the five sense-organs? Thinking: "Space is un-

limited", the sphere of infinite space is knowable by pure consciousness of the internal sense isolated from the five sense-organs: thinking: "Consciousness is unlimited", the sphere of infinite consciousness is knowable; thinking: "Nothing exists", the sphere of nothingness is knowable.'

From this we know that *viññāṇa* is still active up to and including the seventh level and actually is the instrument of their attainment. This statement seems to be confirmed by D II 69 where most of the lower levels of *samādhi* (including the seventh) are objectified to worlds of existence and rebirth: *viññāṇaṭṭhitiyo*, 'establishments of consciousness'. This means that *viññāṇa* must be able to get into contact with these same levels already in this life. What happens to *viññāṇa* on the level of *nirodha* is not explicitly stated. But it is probably one aspect or one part of *citta* and probably continues a dormant existence when the activities of *citta* (*saññā* and *vedanā*) cease. And we know that if nibbāna is attained, *viññāṇa* 'ceases'.

Nibbāna and consciousness

WE have by now collected most of the material referring to nibbāna in the Nikāyas. A picture of great complexity has emerged, and it remains for us to organize the material into a consistent theory.

We shall start by recapitulating the main types of definition found in the texts.

1. Nibbāna is defined as an event, a process, a transformation, e.g. *āsavānaṃ khayo*, 'the destruction of the obsessions', *bhavanirodha*, 'the cessation of becoming', *vimutti*, 'release'. Even the word nibbāna itself belongs to this group, and the corresponding verb *nibbāyati*, 'to be extinguished', is in the ordinary language used about fire, but in Buddhist contexts it has the meaning 'to attain nibbāna'.

2. There are definitions which suggest a state (of mind or personality), for instance the definitions in terms of feelings: *sukhaṃ, sivaṃ*, 'happiness', *asokaṃ*, 'freedom from sorrow', *khemaṃ*, 'security', *paramā santi* (I 122), 'perfect peace'. Further: *ārogyaṃ* and similar expressions for 'health'. We have also found a number of perfect participles that literally express a state as a result of an event, e.g. *nibbuto*, 'extinguished', *sītibhūto*, 'grown cool', *vimutto*, 'released'.

3. A number of expressions refer to general conditions of existence. We have found some of them in M I 173: *ajātaṃ*, 'freedom from birth', *ajaraṃ*, 'freedom from ageing', *amataṃ*, 'freedom from death'. These words do not mean that the arahant will not grow old and die, but rather that his conditions of existence will be different in the future: he will not be born and therefore not again grow old and die.

4. Metaphorical expressions are very common, e.g. *dīpa*, 'island', *leṇa*, 'cave' (S IV 372), *samo bhūmibhāgo ramaṇīyo*, 'the delightful stretch of level ground' (S III 109).

5. There are finally non-metaphorical definitions in terms of

external, and possibly metaphysical, facts or objects, e.g. *paramaṃ ariyasaccaṃ* (M III 245), 'the highest truth', *āyatanaṃ* (U 80), 'sphere', 'dimension'.

According to the legend, the experiences that caused the prince Gotama to leave his palaces and become a wandering ascetic was his confrontation with illness, old age and death. These facts of life seem to have followed him always and constituted his main problem. But a further development can be noticed. He found that no man can avoid old age and death in the present life: there is no escape. But they were found to depend on another fact of life, namely birth, and the repetition of this can be prevented. Here we have the beginning of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-series. The present circumstances of a human life—birth, illness, sorrow, old age, death—were summed up into the word *dukkha* and were found to depend on the ceaselessly evolving processes that make up the rest of the series, all of them personal factors. Through a 'stopping' of these factors, release can be attained. This is the core of Buddhism.

But in another sense, he found an escape. He found that it is possible to create something within the own personality that does not change and does not grow old: *citta* can be made immovable and *viññāṇa* 'stopped'.

Citta, which we have called the core of personality, the functional, empirical self, the organizing factor which produces the continuity in the endless succession of processes, is by nature a centre of emotions, desires and moral defilements. It is partly conscious, partly subconscious. It has also intellectual capacities and is capable of being transformed: *āsavehi cittāni vimucciṃsu* (SN, p. 149), 'their minds were freed from the obsessions'. This is one of the event-definitions of nibbāna. And: *vimutti nibbānatthā* (S III 189), 'release is the meaning of nibbāna'. *Citta attains nibbāna*. Nibbāna is also a name for the *state* attained by *citta*: *cittaṃ me susamāhitaṃ vimuttaṃ* (Ta 1), 'my mind is well composed and free'. A *citta* that is freed from the obsessions is not reborn: *anāvattidhammaṃ me cittaṃ kāmabhavāyāti* (A IV 402), 'my *citta* is not of such nature that it will return to the plane of sense-pleasures'. In this way we can join the three first types of definitions enumerated above. They all centre around the new state and conditions of *citta*.

Thus a new type of health (*ārogya*) is created, to be contrasted with the old problem of illness. This is not a negative state: this should be pointed out since it is so often maintained that nibbāna can only be defined negatively. All freedom is not something negative. As a matter of fact, each of the four *āsavā* which are eradicated through the attainment of nibbāna has its positive counterpart:

kāma→*santi*, 'peace' (M I 504)
bhava→*dhuvaṃ*, 'the constant' (S IV 370)
avijjā→*vijjā*, *paññā*, 'understanding'
diṭṭha→*sammādiṭṭhi*, 'right understanding'

The three first of these positive expressions are, as we have seen, important parts of the definitions of nibbāna. A 'nibbana-ed' (*nibbuta*) *citta*, free from obsessions, is therefore calm and unperturbed by desires, constant and unchanging (more often called *accutaṃ* than *dhuvaṃ*), in a state of deep and correct insight.

We can easily understand that a state of personality can be constant and permanent. The mature character is firm and consistent; it is not motivated by whims and emotions. This was one aspect of nibbāna, but more was implied. We know that nibbāna was the end of rebirth and that the medium of rebirth was *viññāṇa*, the stream of conscious processes. Now in nibbāna *viññāṇa* is said to 'stop', and thereby the kammic process, carried by it, also stops, and this is the end of rebirth. A 'stopped' *viññāṇa* cannot again be established and give rise to new 'name and form' after death. This is not so easy to understand if *viññāṇa* signifies the conscious processes as we understand them: the stream of ideas, memories, perceptions, feelings and impulses which all the time flickers across our inner eye. Every moment something is 'conscious', usually to be replaced by something different soon afterwards. How can this process stop, and if it stops, how can normal life go on?

We know how the process can be stopped—by meditation. On the highest level, *saññāvedayitanirodha*, there is no more a differentiated consciousness. But this is not a permanent state, as nibbāna should be, and, after all, *saññāvedayitanirodha* is never identified with nibbāna.

A way out of this dilemma is to describe the nature of the subjective experiences in nibbāna. We have already quoted some of this material.

We observe, first, a certain cleavage in the process of meditation. The mind is more and more emptied, but on each level the monk knows exactly what he has achieved, e.g. D I 184, *ākiñcaññāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññī yeva tasmiṃ samaye hoti*, 'he becomes at that time conscious, subtly but genuinely, of the level of nothingness'. And even when the great experience comes, he makes the conscious reflection that it has come: *vimuttasmiṃ vimuttamhīti ñāṇaṃ hoti* (S IV 20), 'in the freed comes the knowledge: I am free!' We must draw the conclusion that, although *viññāṇa* is 'stopped', still an act of differentiated understanding can take place, so the 'stopped' *viññāṇa* refers to a different layer of consciousness than the momentary surface processes. This is confirmed in M I 523, where it is said that in an arahant the obsessions are always destroyed, but he knows it only when he reflects on it (quoted above, p. 31). This is a most important distinction. There are simply, according to the early Buddhist analysis, two layers of consciousness: what we called the momentary surface processes and the background consciousness. The latter is an habitual state, developed through knowledge, through meditation, through the cessation of all emotions and desires. This constant background is always there and can always be reverted to. It may be described as an *inner refuge*, and some of the metaphorical expressions common about nibbāna seem to describe it well. Some of them can be found in S IV 368 ff: *saraṇaṃ*, 'refuge', *leṇa*, 'cave', *tāṇaṃ*, 'shelter'. This 'stopped' state of *viññāṇa* is therefore one aspect of nibbāna: the inner refuge, the quasi-conscious constant background of knowledge, peace, security, confidence and satisfaction, which is always in the background and, of course, very often fully conscious.

We find several other descriptions of the subjective aspect of this state. We find in S V 302 that *citta* can remain intact in spite of painful bodily feelings (*sārīrikā dukkhā vedanā cittam na pariyādāya tiṭṭhanti*). So in this case the word *citta* is used for this peaceful, uninfluenced background. In A V 207 we find the expression *anuddhato viharati ajjhattaṃ vūpasantacitto*, 'he

remains unshaken, with a calm mind internally'. A very informative simile is found in M I 279 and other places: 'It is like a pure, limpid, serene pool of water in which a man with vision standing on the bank might see oysters and shells, also gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish moving about and keeping still. It might occur to him: this pool of water is pure, limpid. . . . Even so, a monk understands as it really is: this is suffering. . . .' This simile makes it easy for us to understand, across the centuries, what it is all about. Even we can have this calm, unperturbed perception and make the reflection that we have it. And it is clearly said what this simile will explain: the inner state of understanding which is one of the most important sides of nibbāna; again the cleavage into surface and depth.

We will finally again remind of M I 487, where the Tathāgata is called *gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo*, 'deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean'. This occurs in a discussion about the fate of the Tathāgata after death but it is all the same a description of his present state, nibbāna. If we try to visualize a conscious state that could be best described by these words, we will arrive at the type of 'below-the-surface' state just referred to, a completely undisturbed state of passive comprehension, an unlimited, disinterested and problem-free inner space. This is again a description of nibbāna.

The state of this 'immovable, unfluctuating mind' (*asaṃhīram asankuppaṃ cittaṃ*, Ta 649) is often described in terms of emptiness, and we find nibbāna described as *suññatā*, 'emptiness' (M III 108, Ti 46) *animitta*, 'signless' (Ti 46), and *anidassana*, 'free from attributes' (S IV 370). This may mean many things: freedom from impurities, from obsessions, but referring to consciousness, especially the type of emptiness produced by means of meditation. Since the most normal way of attaining nibbāna was meditation and since the main concern of the arahant was to maintain what he had achieved, namely this 'immovable, unfluctuating mind', by means of meditation, it is natural that some of the descriptions of nibbāna have borrowed terms that more properly belong to the area of meditation.

The ultimate aim was to attain freedom from rebirth, and the old age and death which is a consequence of it. This attain-

ment is seen as an automatic product of the destruction of the obsessions and the 'stopping' of *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* is stopped through the formation of the refuge of calm understanding, which we have described. This *viññāṇa* is felt to remain undisturbed forever, it cannot again be established and create a new personality for itself, because there are no more unsatisfied impulses, no more unfulfilled possibilities: there is complete security for the future.

The nibbāna of the Nikāyas is then a transformed state of personality and consciousness. In none of the innumerable cases where the attainment of nibbāna is referred to as the destruction of the obsessions, is it ever suggested that this transformation is not enough: the new state *is* 'the end of suffering'. It is however quite natural that this could be misunderstood. A new experience was created, a very great experience that came to be the dominating fact in the monk's life. Could this experience be purely subjective? Could something so important be only personal? Was it not rather a perception of something more 'real', the ultimate metaphysical truth? This belief became dominating in the Abhidhamma: 'The general point is that nibbāna is distinct from sense objects and is neither a mental event nor a concept. Then nibbāna or the Absolute is a single, i.e. uncompounded, element, a Real (*Paramattha Dhamma*) existing in its own right' (Jayasuriya, 3, p. 149). The attainment of nibbāna would then be a perception of this reality or a merging into it. We have found traces of this interpretation in the Nikāyas, but they are rare and unimportant. It may have started from a misunderstanding of negations like *ajāta* and *amata*, which came to be understood literally as 'not born, not dying', whereas the original meaning was 'freedom from birth and death', referring to the individual whose problems were to be solved. The whole point of Buddhism was actually missed by this misunderstanding. On the other hand it can be understood that an important experience was projected and reified like this, because it would seem more 'real', more universal, more superhuman. Any produced *state* was difficult to make enough permanent, enough clear, enough perfect to meet the ideal. By projecting it, the monk became free from something of the individual responsibility. The task was no longer entirely

his. He could be excused if he was able to see only brief glimpses of the great vision. This was then the beginning of the transformation of Buddhism. In the Nikāyas we can still see the doctrine in its overwhelming freshness and intensity. But the metaphysicians took over and it was changed from a living concern into just another theory.

A Semantic Differential

A good method for mapping the exact meaning of a concept is to construct a semantic differential (13). In this the task of definition is divided into a series of decisions. We can avoid the fascination of vague labels which mars so many discussions of Buddhism, and rather build up a description by using a great many variables. In this way, even the big questions can finally be answered.

Our semantic differential is constructed as a kind of rating scale: a series of descriptive expressions are collected, and in each case we rate its applicability on and importance for the definition of nibbāna. We start with the easiest decisions and go on to the more difficult ones.

Semantic differential for nibbāna

0 = no applicability or no connection
1 = uncertain connection
2 = correlated but not necessary for definition
3 = necessary precondition or byproduct
4 = essential part of definition

Description of nibbāna	0	1	2	3	4
1. pleasant					x
2. knowledge					x
3. liberation					x
4. a transformation of *citta*					x
5. permanent					x
6. attainable in this life					x
7. absence of desires					x
8. an experience					x

	0	1	2	3	4
9. a level of ethical achievement ..				x	
10. a feeling			x		
11. a state of meditation			x		
12. emptiness					x
13. freedom					x
14. peace of mind					x
15. freedom from rebirth					x
16. an event, process				x	
17. a state					x
18. conditions and expectations ..				x	
19. conscious state			x		
20. an impersonal state			x		
21. self-realization		x			
22. achieved by causal process ..				x	
23. annihilation	x				
24. immortality			x		
25. a personal achievement				x	
26. real					x
27. entity	x				
28. supernatural knowledge			x		
29. supernatural power		x			
30. a supernatural state	x				
31. knowing the absolute	x				
32. merging into the absolute ..	x				
33. union with God	x				
34. a dimension of existence	x				(x)
35. ultimate truth, *Ding-an-sich* ..	x				(x)
36. universal, superindividual consciousness	x				
The concept nibbāna					
37. consistent	x				
38. indefinable	x				
39. subjective					x
40. empirical					x
41. psychological					x
42. metaphysical	x				(x)

Comments

1. *sukha*, Dh 203.
2. *aññāya nibbutā*, S I 24, 'having attained nibbāna through knowledge'; *sambodhāya nibbānāya*, D II 251 '(leads to) . . . the highest insight, nibbāna'; Ti 432, *bodhiṃ*, 'perfect knowledge'.
3. *mutti*, S IV 372, 'release'.
4. S III 45; D II 81; M II 245, *cittassa vimokho*, 'the release of *citta*'.
5. SN 204, *nibbānapadaṃ accutaṃ*, 'the unchangeable state of nibbāna'; S IV 370, *dhuvaṃ*, 'the constant'. Nibbāna is therefore defined *both* as the event of attainment *and* the subsequent state.
6. A I 159 . . . *sandiṭṭhikaṃ nibbānaṃ hoti akālikaṃ ehipassikaṃ opanayikaṃ paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ viññūhi*, 'Nibbāna is visible in this life, immediate, inviting to come and see, leading onward, to be experienced personally by the wise.'
7. *tanhakkhayo*, S III 190, 'destruction of desire'; SN 707 *aniccho*, 'without wishes'.
8. A I 159, see above, no. 6.
9. M I 173, *asankiliṭṭha*, 'freedom from impurities'; S IV 372 *suddhi*, 'purity'; S V 8, *rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo*, 'the destruction of desire, hate and delusion'.
10. Nibbāna is *sukha* but cannot be *defined* as a feeling.
11. See discussion in the text.
12. Ti 46; M III 104 ff. See special chapter.
13. Ta 1165, *nibbānaṃ sabbaganthapamocanaṃ*, 'nibbāna is freedom from every tie'. M I 121 f.
14. I 122, *paramā santi*, 'perfect peace'.
15. S II 117, *bhavanirodho*, 'cessation of rebirth'.

16–18. Definitions in terms of an event are just as common as those expressing a state. It is, however, quite clear that nibbāna refers mainly to a state (see no. 5) and that the event-definitions are just a somewhat careless way of expressing the beginning of this state. The conditions and expectations referred to in no. 18 (e.g. freedom from birth, from ageing, from death) are really a result of the attained state and not to be considered as independent definitions, although usually presented as such in the texts.

19. Nibbāna is often defined in terms of consciousness, but this word can mean different things. Nibbāna is not consciousness in the sense of conscious content in the present time, but it may be a *predominant conscious attitude*, a *half-conscious background*. This we have expressed as a state of *citta* and is more a state of personality than of consciousness in the European sense.
20. *anattaṃ*, U 80. As emptiness (Ti 46) and *animitta*, 'signless', nibbāna is an impersonal state. It can, however, not be understood as completely impersonal. And as long as the arahant is alive, his *khandhā* still exist.
21. I 57, *bhāvitatta*, 'with cultivated self' used about a Tathāgata. This frequent expression and others of the same type could lead us to believe that nibbāna is self-realization. The texts are not always clear, but probably *attā* in these contexts is simply used for *citta*.
22. A V 3.

23–24. Nibbāna is called *ajāta* and *amata*, which is usually translated 'unborn' and 'deathless' but probably means 'freedom from re-birth and re-death'. Nibbāna certainly involves immortality in some form.

25. The personal striving is always stressed, e.g. Dh 80 *attānaṃ damayanti paṇḍitā*, 'the wise discipline the self'.

26. *saccaṃ*, S IV 370, 'real', 'true'.
27. In U 80, nibbāna is called *āyatanaṃ*, 'a dimension', but even this word may be used about psychological states. The negatives in U 80: *ajātaṃ*, etc., *could* refer to a metaphysical entity but we have explained them differently.
28. Supernatural knowledge (*abhiññā*) may be important for the attainment of nibbāna but not necessary.
29. Meditation may lead to the development of supernatural powers, but these have no place in the definition of nibbāna.
30. The decision here is a matter of taste: nibbāna is certainly not statistically 'normal'. But since it may be attained by means of a natural, causal process, we prefer not to call it supernatural. It is never defined as supernatural.
31. This would amount to metaphysical knowledge. By *abiññā* the arahant may know things that from our point of view are 'transcendent', but metaphysical knowledge is never stressed as part of the definition of nibbāna.
32, 33. There are statements in the texts which could be quoted as proof for these views, e.g. *Brahmabhūta* (D III 84), 'Brahma-become', and *amataṃ vigayha* (SN 228), 'merging into the deathless', but they are too isolated to carry much weight.
34. This definition might follow from U 80, but we have preferred another interpretation, which makes this page more consistent with other definitions.
35. Nibbāna is often said by writers about Buddhism to be a name for a supramundane reality or metaphysical *ens*. This is one of the possible interpretations of U 80, but we have found this explanation improbable, see discussion in the text.
36. If the interpretation of nibbāna as a metaphysical *ens* were true, then one possible form of it could be universal consciousness. D I 223 (*viññāṇaṃ anantaṃ* . . .) could be explained in this way, and also a few other descriptions that probably have been transferred from the experiences during meditation.
37–42. These descriptions are chosen in order to define the nature of the concept. 0 here means 'no' and 4 'yes'. Nibbāna is not considered to be a consistent concept since statements are found in the texts which agree badly with the general picture. In many of these cases, however, we do not know whether the reason for this is not an incorrect interpretation from our part. The final interpretation in this book aims at a consistent theory, and according to this nibbāna is an empirical psychological concept belonging to the personal, subjective sphere of experience.

The personality of the arahant

'*Arahant*' means literally 'worthy' and is usually translated 'the perfect man', 'the ideal man', 'saint'. The arahant is the end product of the Buddhist development, as is expressed by the so-called arahant formulas, e.g. I 38: . . . *arahaṃ* . . . *khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇabhavasaṃyojano sammadaññāvimutto*, 'an arahant who has destroyed the obsessions, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, broken the fetters of becoming, won freedom by perfect knowledge'. He is the man who has realized nibbāna, as can be seen from the context from which the last quotation was taken but also from many other contexts, e.g. S IV 252, where *arahatta*, 'arahantship', is given exactly the same definition as nibbāna, namely: *Yo kho āvuso rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idaṃ vuccati arahattanti*, 'The destruction of desire, hate and illusion—that is called arahantship.'

What are the criteria of arahantship? There are two criteria, and both have been mentioned previously. One of them is purely subjective: the fact is realized by means of understanding, a personal conviction that the aim has been attained. The other, less often mentioned, is objective: a person who is already an arahant may examine the mind (*citta*) of others and by means of his superknowledge find out whether it is freed or not (S I 194, A IV 204). The former, subjective criterion is in Pāli expressed by: *arahattapattiṃ vyākaroti*, 'he declares the attainment of arahantship', as in A II 157, or: *aññaṃ vyākaroti*, 'he declares (final) understanding', as in S II 51. A declaration of this type has to be accepted as final: *Yena kenaci pi Sāriputta pariyāyena kulaputto aññaṃ vyākaroti, atha kho vyākatam vyākatato daṭṭhabbanti* (S II 51), 'In whatever way a clansman declares

(final) understanding, the declaration must be considered as such.'

The subjective criterion was liable to be misunderstood, and final understanding could be claimed prematurely or falsely. This was recognized by the Buddha himself: . . . *idh' ekacce moghapurisā hasamānakā maññe aññaṃ vyākaronti* (A III 359), 'there are some foolish fellows here who declare knowledge braggingly (or: jokingly?), it seems'. Something similar is said in M II 252: *santi pan' idh' ekacce bhikkhū adhimānena pi aññaṃ vyākaṃsu*, 'there are also some monks here, who out of over-conceit, declared knowledge'. For a layman it was quite impossible to know whether a certain person was an arahant or not (A III 391, S I 78).

To this looseness of the criterion comes a looseness of the definition, as the majority of all arahants were only *paññāvimuttā*, 'freed by understanding', and only a minority were advanced enough in meditation to see for themselves the truth of the basic teachings (see S I 191, referred to above). Frequently we get the impression that nibbāna was attained through a sudden insight like a conversion (see M III 20, quoted on p. 85). One gets the impression that this was especially common at the beginning of the Buddha's career and that he demanded more later. This general impression is confirmed in S II 224, where Kassapa refers to the fact that there were fewer arahants then than before and asks for an explanation. The Buddha replies: *sattesu hāyamānesu saddhamme antaradhāyamāne bahutarāni ceva sikkhāpadāni honti, appatarā ca bhikkhū aññāya saṇṭhahanti*, 'When beings decrease and the true doctrine disappears, there are more rules and fewer monks are established in knowledge.' It is not clear why he says that the true doctrine tended to disappear in his own lifetime, as his teaching certainly was successful, but we note that the rules had increased in number and the number of arahants had decreased.

As Buddhism is usually explained by writers at the present time, arahantship appears as an unreasonably high ideal. It is certain that to some it seemed difficult, nearly impossible, to attain: for instance to Sihā who worked for seven years and then in desperation tried to hang herself. The Buddha usually prescribed training in meditation during a minimum of seven days

(e.g. M I 63), but we have found that the demands for *paññāvimutti* were less than that. Even in cases when exercises were used, the insight might come quicker. We have, for instance, the story about Bāhiya (U 6), who suddenly decided to find out what the Buddha's teaching was all about and found him on his way to the usual begging round and insisted on being taught at once. After some protests because of the unsuitable time, the Buddha relented and told him in a few sentences how he should train himself, and then left him. Bāhiya immediately started to apply the teaching, but before the Buddha had returned from his begging round, perhaps two or three hours later, he was attacked and killed by 'a young calf'. When the Buddha returned and saw what had happened, he pronounced Bāhiya as *parinibbuto*. As to the timing, this is probably one of the most precise accounts that we can find. The background of Bāhiya is not known, but he was probably a monk although not familiar with the Buddhist way.

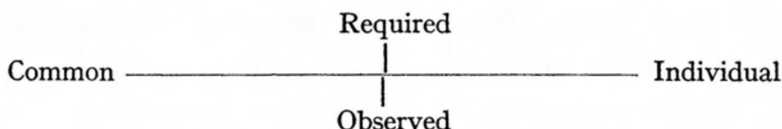
From accounts of this type we must draw the conclusion that the changes of personality affected through attaining arahantship may not always have been profound. We should also not expect any great homogeneity among the arahants, also not very great differences between arahants and followers on other levels of development. This is clear from texts like A I 23 ff, where the Buddha's most important disciples are enumerated and described but without mentioning whether they were arahants or not. Ānanda, for instance, was the Buddha's personal attendant and one of his chief disciples and a successful teacher for many years without being an arahant.

The arahants during the Buddha's lifetime must have been a rather heterogeneous crowd. There were extremely gifted, serious and devoted men like Sāriputta and Anuruddha, but there were also fakes. There were men who had attained everything that could be attained by meditation, but there were also many with a very brief, although serious confrontation with the teaching.

As it is most common nowadays to stress the perfection, the homogeneity, even the lack of individuality, of arahants, let us investigate this matter a bit more closely. It would be preferable, in an analysis of this type, to classify the traits in two ways,

namely in common traits and individual traits, on the one hand, and in traits demanded by definition and traits empirically observed, on the other. They could be combined into one system, as shown below. We shall, however, find that there will be no individual traits demanded by definition and that the texts never distinguish between observed and required traits. So we are left with two categories, required common traits and observed individual traits.

1. In spite of the great differences as to type and extent of preparation for arahantship, similarity is required in a great number of respects. As arahantship in principle was considered attainable by everybody (although 'individual differences in mental endowment', *indriyavemattataṃ*, M I 437, were recognized), the similarities must mainly consist in acquired traits. The whole concept of arahantship would have broken down rapidly, if too many disciples had shown themselves unable to reach it for congenital reasons.



A generalized description of the Buddhist Ideal Man can easily be compiled from the Nikāya literature.

In general, we get a picture of monkish activities, virtues and attitudes. This is natural, since life as a monk was chosen for the purpose of reaching arahantship. Most arahants were monks. However, monkhood was never considered to be a condition for reaching arahantship. Many lay arahants are mentioned, in A III 450 f, for instance, twenty-one are enumerated. The method they are said to have followed consists of six steps: *Buddhe aveccappasādena, dhamme aveccappasādena, sanghe aveccappasādena, ariyena sīlena, ariyena ñāṇena, ariyāya vimuttiyā*, 'perfect faith in the Buddha, in the doctrine, and in the order, noble morality, noble knowledge, and noble release'. This is not the ordinary eight-fold way, and the different types of meditation are conspicuously missing. But we cannot draw the conclusion that meditation was not permitted to, or

practised by laymen. On the contrary, exercises in both *sati* and *samādhi* must have been quite common among lay followers. The mother of Nanda, Veḷukantakupā, for instance, used to practise the four *jhānas*, according to A IV 63 ff. In principle it was therefore considered quite possible to combine a worldly profession with Buddhist training and arahantship—possible but hardly normal, because there are indications that the lay arahants felt inferior and were also considered as such.

The arahant is supposed to personify the Buddhist moral ideal. He should be so imbued with the basic virtues that it is impossible for him to act otherwise, as it is said in M I 523: *abhabbo khīṇāsavo bhikhu sañcicca pāṇaṃ jīvitā voropetuṃ, abhabbo khīṇāsavo bhikku adinnaṃ theyyasankhātaṃ ādātuṃ, abhabbo khīṇāsavo bhikkhu methunaṃ dhammaṃ patisevituṃ, abhabbo khīṇāsavo bhikkhu sampajānamusā bhāsituṃ, abhabbo khīṇāsavo bhikkhu sannidhikārakaṃ kāme paribhuñjituṃ seyyathā pi pubbe agāriyabhūto*. 'A monk, whose obsessions have been destroyed (he is explicitly called arahant in the preceding sentence), is unable to kill a living creature intentionally, to take, by means of theft, what has not been given, to have sexual intercourse, to speak a deliberate lie, to store up and enjoy objects of pleasure, as he did formerly as layman.'

These are the ordinary negative formulations, but we find also more positive expressions, e.g. A I 211 f: *yāvajīvaṃ arahanto pāṇātipātaṃ pahāya pāṇātipātā paṭiviratā nihitadaṇḍā nihitasatthā lajjī dayāpannā sabbapāṇabhūtahitānukampino viharanti*, 'as long as they live, the arahants, by abandoning the slaying of creatures, are abstainers from the slaying of creatures, have laid aside the rod and the sword; they are modest, show kindness, remain friendly and compassionate to all living beings'. The text then points out that the arahants avoid stealing, unchastity and deception, using somewhat more positive formulations than in the former quotation. It continues: *Yāvajīvaṃ arahanto . . . surāmeraya-majjapamādaṭṭhānā paṭiviratā, . . . ekabhattikā rattūparatā viratā vikāla-bhojanā, . . . naccagītavādita-visūkadassanāmālāgandhavilepanadhāraṇamaṇḍanavibhūsanaṭṭhānā paṭiviratā, . . . uccāsayanamahāsayanā paṭiviratā nīcaseyyaṃ kappenti mañcake vā tiṇasanthārake vā. . . .* 'As long as they live, the arahants . . . abstain from indulgence in alcoholic and

intoxicating drinks which cause laziness, . . . live on one meal a day, abstaining from food at unseasonable hours, refrain from going to exhibitions of dance, singing and music, from the use of garlands, perfume and cosmetics, from wearing adornments and decorations, . . . abstain from the use of high, wide beds, and make their bed lowly, on a pallet or on a spread of straw.'

Some positive formulations are also to be found in A V 205: *iti bhinnānaṃ vā sandhātā sahitānaṃ vā anuppadātā samaggārāmo samaggarato samagganandī samaggakaraṇiṃ vācaṃ bhāsitā hoti*. 'Thus he reconciles those who are at variance and confirms the friendly. He delights in harmony, finds pleasure therein, rejoices in harmony and utters words that make for harmony.' *Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemaniyā hadayangamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamanāpā, tatthārūpiṃ vācaṃ bhāsitā hoti*. 'Whatever speech is blameless, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, speech that goes to the heart, is urbane, delights many people—such speech does he utter.'

To the early Buddhists, the conscious processes were much more important than behaviour. This is certainly one explanation why the general impression of the arahant is one of passive perfection rather than social, extravert action. Another is that no feeling of collective responsibility existed. It was the main task of the individual to perfect himself and leave the wheel of existences; he could bring no other with him: *kammaseṭṭhassa kārakā: rāgaṃ dosaṃ pajahanti* (Ti 275), 'they do the best work: they drive out desire and hate'. This is self-centred and lonely work. Still, social activity existed, and an arahant could nurse sick colleagues (see, e.g. S IV 56), although he usually preferred to preach to them.

It was not forbidden to an arahant to work for his living, as we have seen, but it was not encouraged. All fundamental questions in this connection were simply avoided. According to SN p. 13, the Buddha was once reproached by a farmer for not working: 'You should plough and sow too; only when you have done that, you should eat!' The Buddha avoided the reproach by saying that he did just so: 'Faith is the seed, austerity the rain', etc.

Still, bodily activity did exist, and the problem of the arahant was to keep it free from kammic effects. This was done by means

of *sati*, and it is said, S V 302, that 'the arahant generally spends his time with his mind well established in these four states of mindfulness': *arahaṃ . . . imesu catusu satipaṭṭhānesu supatiṭṭhitacitto bahulaṃ viharati*. And so: *kāyakammaṃ suci* (Ti 277), 'the bodily work is pure'.

The typical extraverted work was, as we have seen, verbal: *vacīkamma*, consisting in teaching, settling disputes, giving advice, discussing. As the arahants are completely without egotism (*asmimāno samucchinno*, 'the pride "I am" is rooted up', S III 83), their teaching is gentle and they are careful not to offend (SN 632, *akakkasaṃ viññāpaniṃ*, 'teaching gently', *nābhisaje kañci*, 'he offends nobody'). They are friendly towards everybody: *sabbamitto sabbasakho sabbabhūtānukampako*, 'everybody's friend, everybody's comrade, compassionate towards all beings' (Ta 648). They are tolerant (*labhantu lābhakāmā*, 'may those earn who want to', says Kassapa, S II 198) but are not afraid of correcting others; at least, it is said about Sāriputta, S I 63: *pāpagarahī āyasmā Sāriputto*, 'the venerable Sāriputta is a censor of the bad'.

The arahant is therefore not free from activity, but all activity must be of a type permitted by the laws of morality and performed in such a way that no kammic consequences are produced. According to modern psychology no activity is possible without motivating forces (usually called needs, desires, etc.). So what are the motivating forces behind the acts of the arahant?

The answers given by the texts seem somewhat contradictory. First, the physiological needs are still there, although severely disciplined. The arahant still becomes hungry and is permitted to eat, although frugality is encouraged. The sexual need is supposed to be completely mastered, and Ānanda says, Ta 1039, that for twenty-five years he has been free from 'thoughts of sense-pleasures', *kāmasaññā*. It was permitted to satisfy reasonable needs of physical comfort. The social needs were more problematic, as they have strong moral overtones, the egotistic ones having negative value and the altruistic ones positive value. The arahants are *anejanto*, 'free from desire', and *tanhā tesaṃ na vijjati*, 'no thirst is found in them' (S III 83). Now, we know from D II 78 that only 'wrong wishes', *pāpikānaṃ icchānaṃ*,

are forbidden and from D II 279 that behaviour is of two types, one that can be recommended (*sevitabbaṃ*) and one that should be avoided (*asevitabbaṃ*). The former gives rise to *kusalā dhammā*, 'skilful processes'. From this we could draw the conclusion that the arahant is free from needs leading to immoral acts only and has kept or acquired motivation for good acts. This can, however, not be the whole truth, as he is not very keen on activity of any type: *Natthi . . . arahato uttarikaraṇīyaṃ*, 'for an arahant there is nothing further to be done' (S III 168). According to S II 82, already quoted, he 'does not perform an act of merit, not an act of demerit and not a neutral act'. According to SN 636, *puññañ ca pāpañ ca ubho sangaṃ upaccagā*, 'he has passed good and evil, both being fetters', and he 'is rid of likes and dislikes, cool': *hitvā ratiñ ca aratiñ ca sītibhūtaṃ* (SN 642). He is often called *akiñcana*, translated 'man of nothing' (e.g. S I 141). This seems to indicate a more advanced level, where little motivation, in either direction, is left. He seems unconcerned, an outsider, a stranger. He is *anaññaneyyo* (SN 364), 'not to be led by another'. He 'does not agree with anybody and does not quarrel with anybody', *na kenaci saṃvadati na kenaci vivadati* (M I 500). He 'sees security all ways', *khemaṃ passati sabbadhi* (SN 953). He has 'no hope, neither in this world nor beyond', *āsā yassa na vijjanti asmiṃ loke paramhi ca* (SN 634). In spite of this, he is 'active', *ātāpī* (Ta 1).

From a psychological point of view it is beyond doubt that if there *really* is nothing more to attain and no hope, there can be no activity. If the arahant still acts, it may be that he responds to very weak motivations that do not become conscious, or that he acts from conscious motives, e.g. *mettā*, 'friendliness', *karuṇa*, 'compassion', which he approves of but does not count as meritorious or even as motives at all. Anyway, his attitude remains friendly, even helpful, but still 'cool'. He is uninfluenced and enjoys complete inner freedom. He is based on nothing and never tries consciously to achieve anything. When an arahant conquers an opponent in a dispute and even calls him 'stupid fellow' (*moghapurisa*, D III 27), we are to assume this to be a spontaneous outflow of a personality that is in reality disinterested but continues to act in a friendly, helpful and ethical manner because his previous training has created a 'second na-

ture' of this type. His actions are in this way not motivated by a desire to win anything by them.

If we try to solve the contradictions in this way, we cannot avoid an impression of machine-like perfection, a clock, once drawn up and continuing to work impersonally and unintentionally. There may be texts that give this impression, but at least the warm and vivid descriptions of the Buddha's own activity swear against it. So the contradiction remains: either the Buddha did not live up to his ideal or the ideal was sometimes badly formulated.

Since the arahant is free from desire (we can say this, at least) and is therefore detached and independent, his emotional state is correspondingly calm, undisturbed, confident, free from fear and free from worries. He is happy and content, even if blamed or persecuted. A few quotations may show this. *So vissattho gacchati, vissattho tiṭṭhati vissattho nisīdati vissattho seyyaṃ kappeti* (M I 175). 'He walks confidently, stands confidently, sits down confidently, goes to sleep confidently.' He is *akkodhana*, 'free from anger', and *anussada*, 'free from pride' (SN 624). He is *santo*, 'calm' (SN 946), *apetabheravo*, 'free from fear' (Ta 5), *santusito*, 'content' (Ta 8), *saṃyojaniyehi vippamutto*, 'freed from fettering ideas' (SN 363), *na paritassati*, 'he does not worry' (SN 621). He is *sukhin*, 'happy' (S III 83), and *akkosaṃ vadhabandhañ ca aduṭṭho—titikkhati*, 'endures, without ill will, insult, blows and fetters' (SN 623). The arahant is therefore not without feelings, and pleasant feelings are even important to him (S III 168). Although he was not interested in the dance and music of that time (as being too sensual?), he was not without aesthetic sensitivity, and aesthetic enjoyment was not considered an obstacle. There are in the Nikāyas plenty of references to appreciation of scenic beauty. The Buddha sometimes commented on the beauty of a place, and Ta 1062 speaks about *bhūmibhāgā manoramā*, 'districts delightful to the mind'.

The individual constellation of the feelings and emotions of a person are said to constitute his *temperament*. The temperament is believed to be congenital to a very great extent and has much to do with the needs, their directions and strength. Now in the arahant the structure of the needs has become profoundly changed, through training and understanding: it has become weaker and

what is left has been redirected towards accepted values. In this process the temperament has changed also and has become to some extent similar in all arahants: calmness, slowness in motion, carefulness, freedom from fear and worries are some of these common temperamental traits.

There are similarities in the *cognitive* processes also. The perceptual apparatus is of course still intact, but the use made of it may have changed as a result of the new attitudes and values and the meditational exercises. Perception and thinking is in the ordinary person not altogether realistic and objective. There are usually some distortions from the needs (you exaggerate what you *want* to see) and defence mechanisms (a fact that is flattering to you is seen as more important). Unrealistic influences of this type would be expected to diminish in the arahant, as his needs are less strong or redirected (sublimated?) and he has no egotism. This is also pointed out for instance in M I 4: . . . *arahaṃ . . . paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti*, 'the arahant . . . knows earth as earth', etc. And, therefore: *paṭhaviṃ nābhinandati*, 'he does not rejoice in the earth'. In A III 378 we find this statement: *sammā-vimuttacittassa bhikkhuno bhusā ce pi cakkhuviññeyyā rūpā cakkhussa āpāthaṃ āgacchanti, nev'-assa cittaṃ pariyādiyanti, amissīkatam ev'assa cittaṃ hoti, ṭhitaṃ ānejjappattaṃ*, 'If forms cognizable by the eye come very strongly into the range of vision of a monk whose mind has attained the perfect release, then they do not obsess his mind and his mind is untroubled, firm and composed.' These texts tell us that the perceptions of the arahant remain isolated: they are not changed to suit personal interests and they are also not allowed to disturb his peace of mind. That they still may become sources of disturbance becomes evident from M III 107 f: *atthi c'evāyaṃ darathamattā, yadidaṃ imaṃ eva kāyaṃ paṭicca saḷāyatanikaṃ jīvitapaccayā ti*, 'there is only this degree of disturbance, namely the six sensory fields that, conditioned by life, are grounded on this body itself'.

Since most arahants had devoted much time to exercises in meditation, we must ask whether the cognitive processes are in any way modified by these exercises. We might expect greater control over the conscious processes, greater stability and less mixture of cognitions and emotions. In D III 226 it is said that,

when a monk sees an object with the eye, then: *rakkhati cakkhindriyaṃ, cakkhindriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati*, 'he guards the visual sense and attains to mastery over it'. This is an example of a technique called *saṃvarapadhānaṃ*, 'effort of control'. The next technique is also of interest here, namely *pahāna-padhāna*, 'effort of repression'. Part of the definition is: *uppannuppanne pāpake akusale dhamme nādhivaseti pajahati vinodeti byantikaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti*, 'when evil, unskilled processes have arisen, he will not endure them but puts them away, represses, exterminates and destroys them'. This is a technique well known to psychoanalysts and by them called repression. The psychoanalytic repression is an ego-defence consisting in an active forgetting of embarrassing and compromising facts. The *pahāna* is a similar 'forgetting', but the early Buddhists probably never noticed that repression does not lead to annihilation and that repressed material may continue to influence consciousness indirectly, from its hiding place in the unconscious layers of personality. For the Buddhists, repression is simply a method of control and purification.

The arahants are said to be clever in discussions, and their wisdom is profound: *gambhīrapaññaṃ medhāviṃ maggāmaggassa kovidaṃ* . . . (SN 627), 'he who has profound wisdom, is intelligent, skilled in all ways . . .' However, theoretical exercises were not encouraged, and *diṭṭhi*, 'speculative views', was counted as one of the obsessions. The arahant is even defined as one without 'thoughts', *vitakkā* (U 71): *yassā vitakkā vidūpitā ajjhattaṃ suvikappitā asesā . . . na jātim eti*, 'he whose thoughts are destroyed and cut off without remainder internally . . . he will not go to birth'. By meditation he can attain different types of supernatural knowledge. These are described in D I 77–83. Most important of these are *dibbā sotadhātu*, 'clair-audience', by which he could 'hear sounds both human and celestial, whether far or near'; *cetopariyañāṇa*, 'telepathic knowledge' or mind-reading; *pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*, 'retrocognitive knowledge of past existences', by means of which he can remember his past existences and verify the fact of rebirth; *sattānaṃ cutūpapātañāṇa*, 'knowledge of the decease and survival of beings', by means of which he can see how the law of *kamma* has worked in other beings, how they have lived and what type of rebirth they

have got. To this is always added *āsavakkhayañāṇa*, 'knowledge of the destruction of the obsessions' which, then, here is counted among the supernatural achievements. As a matter of fact, every arahant had to know for himself that his obsessions were destroyed—this was the criterion of arahantship. Usually this act of insight was achieved through *paññā*, which could be developed even without meditation.

2. We may well ask whether this ideal, as we have described it just now, is human. Can it be realized by human beings? And, if it is realized, are there any individual traits left in the person? It is difficult to get clear answers to these questions, as they were not anticipated in the texts. What we can do is to look for descriptions of individual arahants.

With regard to individual differences, it is interesting to note that the Buddha always took individuality for granted, and he seems to have liked to comment on differences among his disciples. Our chief source of knowledge about such differences is perhaps A I 23 ff, where twenty-eight monks are mentioned as foremost in some respect. Unfortunately, no distinction is made between arahants and not-yet-arahants, so we cannot restrict the following discussion to arahants.

The following differences of psychological interest are mentioned in this text:

(a) memory
(b) knowledge
(c) understanding, intelligence
(d) wit (Vangīsa was *paṭibhānavant*, 'witty')
(e) power of meditation
(f) supernatural power of different types
(g) energy
(h) pedantry (Mahā Kassapa is called *dhutavāda*, 'one who inculcates punctiliousness')
(i) charm (Upasena Vangantaputta was *samantapāsādika*, 'altogether charming')
(j) ability to speak
(k) ability to teach
(l) social habits (some are said to have loved seclusion, e.g. Sāriputta)

(m) power of reconciliation (Kāḷudāyī was good at that, while Anuruddha, according to A II 239, never intervened)
(n) interest in austerities (Kassapa had strong inclinations to asceticism, according to S II 202)
(o) faith

We find that this list covers most of the commonly observed personality differences, with the exception of all moral traits and all abnormalities. The list implies that there are individual differences also with regard to traits in which an arahant should be perfect, e.g. knowledge, understanding and energy.

S II 155 describes a situation, where the Buddha watches groups of his disciples walking to and fro in the neighbourhood. He notices that the groups are somewhat homogeneous and that similar people feel attracted to each other. So, those 'of great understanding' (*mahāpaññā*) have flocked around Sāriputta, those 'of great magic power' (*mahiddhikā*) are in Moggallāna's group, those 'who have learnt much' (*bahussutā*) follow Ānanda, and monks 'with evil wishes' (*pāpicchā*) have chosen Devadatta (who certainly was no arahant).

We may conclude that it was considered natural, that even arahants kept their individual traits and developed new ones during the course of training. Only moral imperfections were supposed to be completely eradicated.

Did the arahants live up to the ideal? Is it correct to call them 'the perfect ones'? We may be sceptical, as we find perfection a rare guest on this planet. And considering the different qualifications of the arahants, in terms of abilities, length of training, etc., we feel inclined to expect even less. It is difficult to find an objective answer to the questions, as we have no external source of information, but only Buddhist accounts. But if we collect what information we can get from the latter, we have to admit that the most important disciples of the Buddha must have been men of great ability and unusual moral stature. A doctrine that can produce such extraordinary results is really one of the rare culminations in the spiritual history of mankind. When this is said, it can still be admitted that perfection is a relative concept and that the arahants were after all only human beings. The texts do not criticize the arahants, but they tell about incidents that

we think unexpected and inconsistent. Why did, for instance, Mahānāma Sakka, mentioned in A III 451 as one of the lay arahants, not know what would happen to him 'if he died at that very moment' (S V 369)? Why was it necessary for the Buddha to console and reassure him on that point? This ignorance is rather unexpected in an arahant. And was the behaviour of the famous Kassapa, praised by the Buddha as one of his most accomplished disciples, really quite satisfactory as it is related in S II 214 ff? Here two episodes are related. The first one describes how Kassapa and Ānanda go to the nuns' quarters in order to instruct them. One of the nuns was disappointed that the instruction was given by Kassapa and not by Ānanda. 'Should a needle-peddler try to sell a needle to a needle-maker?' Kassapa heard this remark as he left and later pointed out to Ānanda, how much greater his own achievements were and that the Buddha had praised him, Kassapa, before the Order and not Ānanda. Certainly a modern psychologist would call this self-assertion and self-defence.

In the other episode Kassapa rather violently took Ānanda to task: *sassaghātam maññe carasi kulupaghātam maññe carasi . . . Navayaṃ kumārako mattam aññāsīti*, 'indeed you are wandering about a spoiler of corn, indeed you are wandering about a troubler of families, . . . This youngster does not know the limit'. Whether this was intended as an insult we do not know, but so it was understood both by Ānanda and by one of the listening nuns, as we can see from their remarks.

One more incident can be culled from A IV 206. It is related that one evening the Buddha did not dismiss the monks at the usual time and remained sitting together with them, throughout the night. In the morning Mahāmoggallāna discovered the reason: one of the persons present was not morally pure. With the approval of the Buddha he forcibly threw him out and bolted the door: *taṃ puggalaṃ bāhāyaṃ gahetvā bahidvārakoṭṭhakā nikkhāmetvā sūcighaṭikaṃ datvā* . . ., 'he seized the man by the arm, thrust him outside the porch and bolted the door'.

Quite frequently we are told in the texts that arahants are tempted or frightened by Māra (e.g. Ta 46) or that they dream of beautiful fairies (e.g. A IV 262). To this a psychologist would comment, that although their conscious life perhaps was

completely purified, the deeper and unconscious layers in their personalities were not so. Some traces of the old desires and insecurities were still there and found their outlet in the only way still permitted to them: projected as external appearances. Since they were seen as external facts they were accepted and could even be described in the texts.

The related episodes are difficult to interpret. Maybe Kassapa was entitled and even obliged to reproach Ānanda. But it was not permitted to boast about personal achievements, as we know from A V 158, where a monk who is 'boasting about his achievements' (*vikatthī adhigamesu*) is called 'immoral' (*dussīlo*). And, according to A V 156 f, a monk who is angry (*kodhano*) or envious (*issukī*) or finds fault with others (*upanāhī*) cannot 'reach increase, growth and maturity in his *dhamma*-discipline'. And certainly the Buddha usually found better methods of coping with people than throwing them out: arahants should be *dayāpannā sabbapāṇabhūtahitānukampino*, A I 211, 'endowed with kindness, friendly and compassionate to all creatures and all beings'. So from an absolute point of view these incidents must be seen as shortcomings and inconsistencies. But since they are left without comment in the text they were evidently accepted as normal. This can only mean one thing: the absolute point of view should not be applied. The idea that arahantship was a superhuman degree of perfection is incorrect. The individualities of the arahants were taken for granted and were respected, and self-assertions and defence mechanisms were to a certain extent considered as normal and permitted. And, if we are not mistaken, the idea of an Absolute Ideal is a European invention!

Summary and conclusions

We have tried to construct a comprehensive theory of nibbāna, a theory based on all the most ancient texts, a theory with as few contradictions as possible. Especially, we have tried to find out how far nibbāna can be described in psychological terms. Our results, such as they are, may be summarized in the following way.

The descriptions found in the texts belong to several spheres:

We may speak about the *transformation sphere*. Nibbāna is never described as the natural state of a human being but always as the result of a dramatic change. It is something that has to be achieved, by means of practical training and intellectual effort. Just as everything was conceived to follow causal laws, so was also the attainment of nibbāna thought to be a causal process.

By means of this transformation, which seems to have been the basic and all-important part of the attainment of nibbāna, *citta* was transformed. *Citta* is not simply the mind and also not simply personality but something of both: the organizing centre, the conscious core of personality, often described as an empirical and functional self (but not *attā*), perhaps ultimately analysable into processes. The new, transformed state of *citta is* nibbāna: a state of fulfilment in which all needs and emotions have gone, a state of calm contentment and of complete intellectual insight. It is a state of internal freedom, where all dependence, insecurity and defence have disappeared. Ethical behaviour has become second nature, and the attitude towards others is friendliness, acceptance and humility.

This transformation is most often referred to as the destruction of the obsessions (*āsavakkhayo*): sensuality, becoming, speculative views and ignorance. This is described as the end of the development, and nothing more is required of the disciple.

It is then the main fact about nibbāna, although more is involved.

There is, secondly, the *rebirth sphere*. Every human being is subject to rebirth, according to the Buddhist doctrine, and the form this will take is decided through the law of *kamma*, a moral law of causality. But by the attainment of nibbāna, the chain of births is interrupted. This is evidently, from a psychological point of view, a transcendent theory, but something of it may still be understood, because the law is said to work through the medium of *viññāṇa*, 'consciousness'. This leads us to the third sphere.

There are many definitions belonging to the *sphere of consciousness*, since nibbāna is said to be happiness (*sukhaṃ*), peace (*santi*) and security (*khemaṃ*). It is intellectural clarity (*paññā, aññā*): the type of clarity, wholeness and immobility that can come after a long struggle with a difficult problem, when the solution suddenly is found, and the consciousness is suddenly transformed and becomes calm, structured and relieved.

Nibbāna is often described as the 'stopping' of *viññāṇa*, which (to judge from SN 734 and 735, and D I 223) means the same as 'calming' and 'emptying'. In nibbāna, *viññāṇa* has become calm and undisturbed; since the activity (*sankhāra*) has become pure, *viññāṇa* no longer accumulates kammic effects. The sensory processes no longer lead to emotions and desires. As there are no desires and no kammic accumulations, there will be no more rebirth. Psychologically we have tried to explain this in terms of observed internal causality. Desire leads to its own prolongation, and so does equilibrium. Needs are observed as causal factors, and strong attachment to life is experienced as leading to new life.

Ordinarily *viññāṇa* carries the energies that 'flow over' to the next existence and create the new individual. But if *viññāṇa* is 'calm', 'stopped', it cannot 'flow over' but remains stable. *Viññāṇa* is the stream of differentiated conscious processes; therefore it normally affects *citta* or is simply a name for some of the activities of *citta* (*cittasankhāra*). In nibbāna the *viññāṇa*-processes stop and *citta* attains stability and freedom.

When we speak about nibbāna as a fact of consciousness, we

have to choose our words very carefully in order to cover all the facts. A knowledge can be present in the surface-consciousness, and it can be stored below the surface. The processes even of the surface-consciousness can be made to stop, especially by means of meditation, but only temporarily. Therefore, this temporary state of surface-consciousness cannot be identified with nibbāna. But by eradicating all desires, by habitual efforts to concentrate, by perfect understanding, a half-conscious, permanent background can be created, a background of peace (*santi*), satisfaction (*sukha*), purity (*suddhi*), freedom (*anālaya*). It is impersonal (*anatta*), cool (*sītibhūta*), empty (*suñña*), even undifferentiated (*animitta, anidassana*). It is a state of health (*ārogya*), an inner refuge (*atta-saraṇo anañña saraṇo*, D II 100), which is always there (*accutaṃ*) and can always be actualized or reverted to but may not always be actually noticed. This state of *citta* and *viññāṇa* is nibbāna, as seen from the aspect of consciousness. A person who has nibbāna does not always think of nibbāna, and his surface-consciousness still functions.

In ordinary rebirth sometimes *viññāṇa* and sometimes *citta* is said to carry on the identity. But when an arahant dies, the *viññāṇa*-processes 'go home', and the 'stillness' and 'emptiness' of *citta* makes it survive, free and anonymous (except for other arahants). That is, *citta* is very little changed by the physical death, as it was considered incomprehensible even before. This we have, at least, found to be the most reasonable interpretation of the obscure hints which are scattered in the Nikāyas.

There are, fourthly, traces of a *metaphysical sphere* of descriptions to be found in the texts. We have found two trends.

There is the tendency to describe nibbāna as a separate dimension of existence, outside *saṃsāra*, the absolute opposite to our world, where none of the imperfections of this world is to be found: 'where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun' (U 80). Even though many monks pass away in that condition of nibbāna, there is no shrinkage nor overflow (U 55). This way of describing nibbāna is also found in D I 223, where this 'anti-world' is ascribed to the stopped *viññāṇa* of the arahant. We can therefore explain it as an *experienced world* projected as a real world. This experienced

world could be produced by means of meditation and could easily be experienced and described as real.

There is also another trend that has been much stressed in the later development, a tendency to describe nibbāna as a metaphysical substance, transcending space, time and causality, a supramundane reality, with independent existence. Nibbāna is, according to these writers, attained by complete understanding of or perhaps merging into this reality. There are few traces of this trend in the Nikāyas, mainly in the form of negations like *ajātaṃ, amataṃ, akataṃ, asankhataṃ*, translated 'unborn, deathless, unmade, uncompounded' (esp. U 80). We have pointed out that this translation may not be correct and that the intended meaning was 'freedom from birth, freedom from death, freedom from creation, freedom from putting together'. This translation would set us back to the personal plane with which discussions of nibbāna are usually concerned. Even if we translate in the traditional way, these words need not be taken as referring to a supramundane reality but to experiences in the *viññāṇa* of the arahant (D I 223): experiences of something timeless, unchangeable, inexpressible, in which distinctions and opposites do not exist. Again, there would easily arise a tendency to project experiences of this type outside consciousness and interpret them as perceptions of something external and not only as subjective ideations.

Since experiences of the types we have discussed in the two last paragraphs are typically developed by means of meditation and since meditation was so extensively practised by the early arahants, we feel inclined to speak about a *meditational sphere* of description rather than a metaphyscial sphere. It seems very probable that some of the many descriptive terms used about nibbāna, especially many of the negative ones, came from the sphere of meditational experiences, e.g., *animitta, accuta, suñña.* These experiences were then seen as more or less essential to nibbāna itself and became part of the definitions. At some stage they became the starting-point for metaphysical interpretations.

The problem of the Buddha was the human situation here and now: the suffering as conditioned by impermanence, *kamma* and rebirth. To eradicate suffering and stop the chain of causes

leading over to new life was his aim. Although this aim leads beyond the scope of psychology, the means he found to this end can as we have demonstrated, mainly be understood as empirical and psychological: nibbāna is mainly a psychological fact. But if this is true, nibbāna can be compared to similar concepts in our time. The ideal state, according to modern psychological thinking, is called mental health. It is legitimate to compare this concept to nibbāna, as the Buddha himself frequently described nibbāna as health (e.g. M I 173, 511, Dh 204).

Mental health has been defined in many ways. We shall confine ourselves to mentioning one typical definition. R. B. Cattell (1, p. 261–264) has found three characteristics in a healthy person:

1. *Adaptation*, i.e. effectiveness of living. By means of (a) adaptation to moral norms, and (b) adaptation to the physical and social world, normal chances of survival are assured to the person himself and to the society in which he lives.

2. *Adjustment*, i.e. freedom from internal friction. A person who is free from inner conflicts will waste little energy on doubts and repressions. He is stable and has high resistance to trauma. He feels happy and relaxed.

3. *Integration*, i.e. an harmonious structure of values and purposes. The healthy person has a single goal or an harmonious set of goals and he is capable of long-circuited behaviour.

Comparing this conception of health to nibbāna, we find similarities but also important differences.

(1a) With regard to the adaptation to the moral norms, the similarity is great. The Buddha, however, stressed the importance of morality much more than the modern psychotherapists.

(b) In our time the social adjustment is considered extremely important. Society is considered more important than the individual. The primary task of each individual is to find his place in society and work for the benefit of society. The Buddha thought differently: to him only the development of the individual was important, and nibbāna meant individual freedom, even from society. Social adaptation to the *sangha* was demanded, but a greater ideal was to extricate oneself from society and live alone in the forest. Still, the monk was usually not un-social: his attitude should be one of universal friendliness and helpfulness.

But social and economic effectivity was a completely alien idea to him. His life did not lead to the reproduction of the race and he was physically independent only when society provided for him. His training encouraged an introvert attitude—which according to modern standards is unhealthy.

(2a) Both nibbāna and mental health should lead to happiness and satisfaction. The background of this feeling is also similar: insight, a realistic self-evaluation, a sense of success and self-fulfilment.

(b) Freedom from inner conflicts is common to both.

(c) A stable emotional life is also required by both definitions. Excessive emotions and strong desires have no place in a mentally healthy person, but motivational forces should not be lacking, they should only be stable and well balanced. Buddhism goes further and demands total 'calming' of all emotions and desires. An arahant should 'demand little'.

3. The arahant was of course an integrated and harmonious personality. He had also a strong and consistent structure of values. But he no longer worked to realize his values, because he had already realized them. Still, he could live and act like an 'ordinary' person. His intelligence functioned freely and effectively. He was helpful. He could appreciate beauty. But he was 'disinterested' because he had nothing more to attain. This gave him an independence which we rarely find in our time. This is one of the great differences between nibbāna and mental health. Buddhism stressed independence in judgment and action much more than our psychotherapists. Because of its greater consistency and radicalism, Buddhism could make its followers much more 'whole' and secure. The modern concept of mental health builds on a narrow balance between opposites: self-assertion and altruism, dominance and humility, strong needs and self-control, success and modesty. Both are considered important but both can be developed only to a point of equilibrium which easily leads to conflict: the ideal of harmonious integration is therefore difficult to realize.

In a word, although we have found great similarities between nibbāna and the concept of mental health, the differences predominate, because they are expressions of very different philosophies. The psychologist stresses society, the personal

success and effectiveness in this world, the unceasing activity (towards badly defined, even dubious and contradictory, goals). The Buddha stressed the individual development to internal freedom and intelligent judgment, 'disinterested' action, balance and stability.

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